

BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

FRANK MILLER with KLAUS JANSON and LYNN VARLEY INTRODUCTION BY FRANK MILLER and BRIAN AZZARELLO



FM/LV





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FORBES

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ROLLING STONE

"One of the **best** Batman stories ever told."

NPR

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"*THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS*, for many people **of my generation**, for many people that followed, from the moment it was published forward, is like *The Catcher in the Rye* of comic books."

KEVIN SMITH

**FRANK
MILLER**

WRITER & PENCILLER

**KLAUS
JANSON**

INKER

**LYNN
VARLEY**

COLORIST

JOHN COSTANZA

LETTERER

BATMAN CREATED BY **BOB KANE** with **BILL FINGER.**

SUPERMAN CREATED BY **JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER.**

By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel family.

BATMAN **THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS**
30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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IN CAFÉS...

A Conversation between Frank Miller and Brian Azzarello, writers of **DARK KNIGHT III: THE MASTER RACE**, about **BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT**, its release, and its lasting impact on the world.

BRIAN: Let's get in a time machine.

FRANK: Okay. No seatbelts, right?

BRIAN: Of course not. It's 1986...

FRANK: Oh hell, can't we go back farther?

BRIAN: Not this time. **DARK KNIGHT** is about to be released. How do you feel? It's done, it's out of your hands, and now it's gonna go to the stores.

FRANK: I am thrilled.

BRIAN: I want to know what came first for you, the world or Batman? **DARK KNIGHT** is so of its time, you know—the whole zeitgeist that was going around in the mid-'80s. Was it, "I want to tell a story with Batman in this world" or "I want to tell a Batman story," and then the world seeped into it?

FRANK: No. My intention in the beginning was to tell a story of Batman at the age he would be at this time if he really aged from his origins. He was aged, he was seeing how the world had changed and how he would bring essentially a World War II mentality to the modern world. To him, it wasn't just criminals he was fighting anymore; it was moral decay and political corruption.

BRIAN: With **DARK KNIGHT** in particular, I believe one of your most important contributions to comics is that you brought the real world into superhero comics, where you were using these characters as a way to comment on what was going on all around us at the time in a way no one had ever done before. Prior to **DARK KNIGHT**, those things were all escapism.

FRANK: And Batman was permanently 29, so I decided to make him 50. At 50 I figured he was closer to dead. I made him look like he was at

least 60, because that's what I figured 50 would look like. And instead of being lean and muscular, I had him massive. I wanted to bring back the Dick Spring characterization, that rectangular guy.

BRIAN: Yeah, he looked like a wrestler or football player when they get older and thick.

FRANK: And if you've taken one hit too many. His face is kind of punched in.

BRIAN: What was your impetus for doing that the first time?

FRANK: Oh, it was very simple: I was 29 years old, I was dreading turning 30. To me that was entering middle age.

BRIAN: Were you excited when you started it? Were you trepidatious? I mean, what was your mind-set...this was 30 years ago.

FRANK: I remember exactly how I felt—I had been dying to do it for years! The only thing that I knew would be an obstacle was the real reverence for the old stuff. So there was initially fear from DC without realizing that I loved these characters. I had no intention of doing anything obscene.

BRIAN: Wasn't necessary.

FRANK: I know, it wouldn't serve any purpose.

BRIAN: What was Paul [Levitz's] reaction when you brought this story to him, the first one?

FRANK: I first brought it to Jenette [Kahn].

BRIAN: Before Paul?

FRANK: Yeah, and she was thrilled about the idea of the story. We talked to Paul and everybody was completely positive about it. Later, when they actually saw it, they got pretty frightened with the material.

BRIAN: Did Jenette ever get frightened?

FRANK: No, she was completely supportive, and Paul very swiftly changed his mind when the first issue came out and it went back for a second and third printing.

BRIAN: But it created quite a stir. It wasn't instantly the revered tome it is now.

FRANK: When it came out, it made many fans very, very angry, but the sales went through the roof, so the dealers were very, very happy. At the same time, the dealers were mostly fans and old collectors who had their comics packed in Mylar snugs. So while I was making them money, I was being accused of violating a trust.

BRIAN: You were taking a piss on their childhood.

FRANK: To me, I was exulting it.

BRIAN: I agree with you, and now 30 years later it's looked at by those very same people you offended as the pinnacle of Batman. I'm not one of those people that look at this work as being so grim and gritty. There's so much political satire in this book.

FRANK: I was laughing while I was writing it.

BRIAN: I read laughter into a lot of it, too.

FRANK: The TV segment with the psychologist, for instance—he would just explain everything, including murder, as being a perfectly healthy function of the human mind.

BRIAN: I mean, the book gets a bad wrap for the way that it is dark and gritty, but it's not. I mean, there are moments, certainly, but those moments only work because they're played against some real broad satire. Even the first time we see Superman, he's got birds around and the sky is all beautiful...

FRANK: And there's Bruce Wayne all cranky. I figured that Clark would only age in terms of handsome wrinkles around his eyes. Otherwise he'd be as iconic as ever, while Batman was just old.

BRIAN: While DK wasn't my introduction to Batman, it definitely was my introduction to Batman as a figure in a comic book. I read it when it was originally coming out, and I was blown away by how you made superhero characters relevant. Really, it was revolutionary. And it was crazy—even the naysayers were on board for the thrill ride. Each issue, you topped yourself.

FRANK: I particularly liked doing the cover to the second one, where he was just beat to crap, just because of the idea of him being someone who's kind of like Rocky. He could take punches better than he could throw them. He could take any punishment you gave him and keep coming.

BRIAN: Which he did. The second one, that was the mutant issue.

FRANK: The guy with the sharp teeth.

BRIAN: That was Batman taking a lot of punishment in that one.

FRANK: Mr. T was a real popular figure at the time.

BRIAN: Clubber Lang.

FRANK: And I patterned his speech as close to Mr. T's as I could.

BRIAN: Wow.

FRANK: I know. I came up with mutant colloquialism from Lynn Varley, who colored DARK KNIGHT. There was a language she and her brothers had amongst themselves that fascinated me, so I had all the mutants speak that way.

BRIAN: Where were you living when you wrote that? Were you here? New York? It had a dangerous reputation at the time.

FRANK: Oh, it was a very bad time. Koch was mayor and he was doing his best to clean things up. Crime was rampant and I had been mugged a few times. I was very, very angry, just watching Clint Eastwood movies back to back, getting absolutely paranoid. I figured if Batman was a grown-up, he'd take care of things.

BRIAN: Was it post- or pre-Bernhard Goetz?

FRANK: Goetz did what he did while I was working on the first issue. It was all very coincidental.

BRIAN: Like I said, it was something about the zeitgeist and you were definitely plugged into it at the time. You know, Batman's 75th anniversary just passed, and it's been 30 years since DARK KNIGHT was released. Your book and your take on Batman has informed the character for nearly half of his existence.

FRANK: Could you order me a wheelchair right now?

BRIAN: I'd be happy to. One for Bruce as well.

So, now it's 30 years later. Looking at the impact the book has had, how do you feel about it?

FRANK: Something Walter Simonson told me was really valuable, which is that when amateurs want to learn from a professional, the thing they tend to learn most often is the professional's mistakes. And so I saw a lot of my faults as an artist replicated by amateurs, and it taught me a lot about how to communicate better. With all my quirks replicated, I saw really how weak my drawing was, and in many ways I learned to make it better. That's been its impact on me, on comics in general. It did affect how creators have paced stories, and that's good somewhat.

The main thing DARK KNIGHT has done is it's given both writers and artists much more freedom to maneuver, and we've taken these once-precious characters in new directions. DARK KNIGHT has been so successful, publishers have realized they have to publish this kind of stuff without putting a condom on it.

—Paris & New York City, November 2015

TRUTH TO POWER

By JAMES OLSEN

There's this little saloon you'll find up and running and packed with patrons before most of us are ready for our morning coffee.

The joint's two subway levels beneath the streets of downtown Metropolis.

Step out at the Shuster stop on the southbound side, take two lefts, walk maybe fifteen feet and you're right on top of it.

But you could just as easily walk right past it and never know it was there.

There's no sign up. Not even a door. Just a dark hallway that looks like a good place for a murder.

Take a breath. Follow the cigarette stink and the bluesy jukebox sounds inside.

It's a tolerable little gin mill. Get there before the morning rush, and you're likely to find a stool.

Your first clue that there's something wrong about the place is the bartender. You'll never forget his face. He's a hulk of a guy who's seen way too much. A broken man with laser-red eyes. His forehead's a fractured cantilever, an avalanche waiting to happen. His skin's gone a little gray from its natural char- treuse.

He's got a voice like Coke bottles getting ground up under a door.

His name is Jones.

He says he's from Mars.

And nobody tells him he's nuts, not one of these sad old barflies. It's not that they're scared of him, either.

They've seen and done things that are supposed to be impossible.

They're not the kind to out-and-out brag about being able to bench-press cars or run faster than a speeding bullet or jump up into the air and stay there. Nah. Not these guys.

These guys, they've got nothing to prove. Been there. Done that.

Except for old "Snapper" always at the same stool at the end, living up to his nickname, snapping his fingers in time to the music and rattling on and on and on about mighty powers, globe-spanning adven-

Continued on page A24

Continued from page A1

tures, nefarious world conquerors, you name it.

He never stops snapping his damn fingers. And he never stops sucking back the sauce and jabbering about the old days. The glory days.

The "Golden Age" he calls it.

The age of heroes.

And all the other old farts, they grunt and nod and grumble at each other, swapping old jokes they've swapped a thousand times. Even fat, beet-red old "Penguin" chirps out a curse or two before bursting into tears.

Then they get talking. And if you've got half a brain, you listen.

They talk about amazing adventures, sounding like a bunch of retired car mechanics the whole time.

They talk about a Man of Steel. An Amazon Princess.

But they never talk about the mean one. The cruel one. The one who couldn't fly or bend steel in his bare hands. The one who scared the crap out of everybody and laughed at all of the rest of us for being the envious cowards we were.

No, they never talk about him. Say his name and watch Dibny's face sag so bad his jaw hits the bar.

Not a man among them wants to hear about Batman.

Was he quietly assassinated? Or did he just decide we weren't worth the grief?

The question hangs in the air for a moment or two, then Jones springs for a round for everybody and himself.

They get talking again. About the old days. The glory days.

They remember.

They were right there. In the thick of it.

Back then.

It wasn't so long ago.

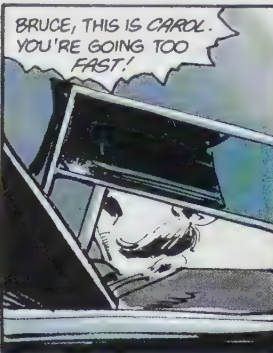
We had heroes.



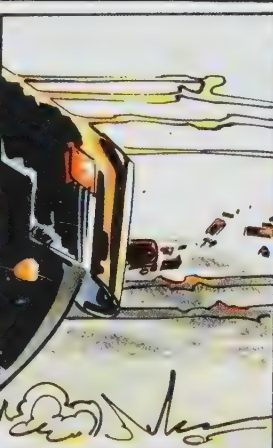
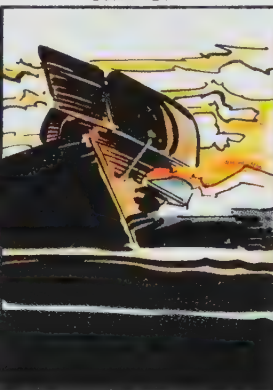


DARK ONE: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS

I'VE GOT THE HOME STRETCH
ALL TO MYSELF WHEN THE
READINGS STOP MAKING SENSE.
I SWITCH TO MANUAL--



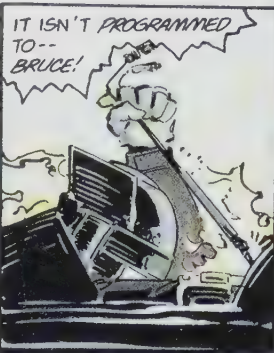
THEN THE FRONT END LURCHES,
ALL WRONGS. I KNOW WHAT'S
COMING.



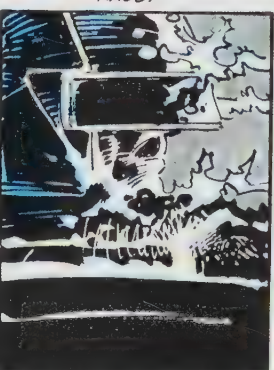
... BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH.



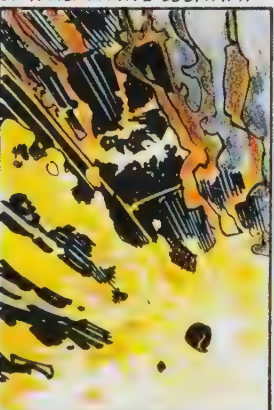
--BUT THE COMPUTER
CROSSES ITS OWN CIRCUITS
AND REFUSES TO LET GO. I
COAX IT.



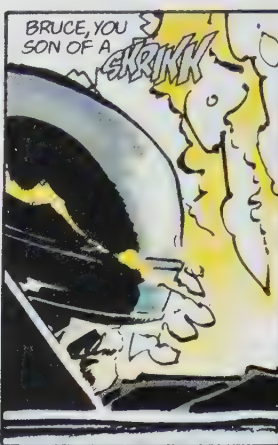
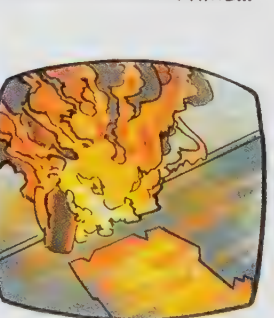
I'VE GOT JUST UNDER TWO
SECONDS TO SHUT THIS MESS
DOWN AND FORFEIT THE
RACE.



THE NOSE DIGS UP A CHUNK
OF MACADAM. I LOOK AT IT--



...SPECTACULAR FINISH TO
THE NEUMAN ELIMINATION,
AS THE FERRIS GOOD
PINWHEELED ACROSS THE
FINISH LINE, A FLAMING
COFFIN FOR BRUCE WAYNE...



THE ENGINE, ANGRY, ARGUES
THE POINT WITH ME. THE
FINISH LINE IS **CLOSE**, IT
ROARS. TOO CLOSE.



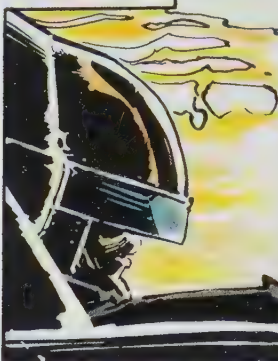
--THEN STRAIGHT INTO THE
EYE OF THE SUN.



...OR SO EVERYONE
THOUGHT. TURNS OUT THE
MILLIONAIRE BAILED OUT
AT THE LAST SECOND.
SUFFERED ONLY **SUPERFICIAL**
BURNS. LOLA?



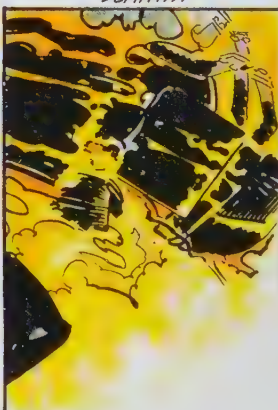
IT SHOVS HOT NEEDLES IN MY
FACE AND TRIES TO MAKE ME
BLIND. I'M IN CHARGE NOW
AND I LIKE IT.



THE LEFT FRONT TIRE
DECIDES TO TURN ALL ON
ITS OWN. I LAUGH AT IT
AND JERK THE STEERING
WHEEL TO THE RIGHT.



THIS WOULD BE A **GOOD**
DEATH...



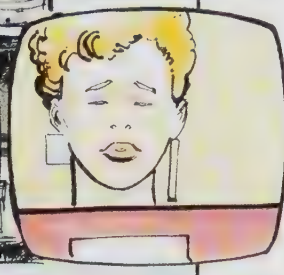
THANKS, BILL.
I'M SURPRISED ANYONE
CAN EVEN THINK OF
SPORTS IN THIS
WEATHER. RIGHT,
DAVE?





RIGHT, LOLA. AT GOTHAM'S MAGNIFICENT TWIN TOWERS IT'S NINETY-SEVEN-- WITH NO RELIEF IN SIGHT.

THANKS, DAVE. THIS HEAT WAVE HAS SPARKED MANY ACTS OF CIVIL VIOLENCE HERE IN GOTHAM CITY...

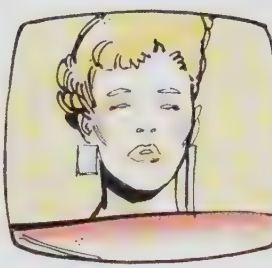


...THE MOST HIDEOUS OF WHICH HAS TO BE THE BRUTAL SLAYING OF THREE NUNS LAST WEEK BY THE GANG KNOWN AS THE MUTANTS.

AND TODAY POLICE FOUND A DEATH THREAT NAILED TO THE DOOR OF THE OFFICE OF POLICE COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON.

GORDON, FACING RETIREMENT ON HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY NEXT MONTH, SPOKE TO A NEWS TWO REPORTER...

I'VE GOT FOUR WEEKS TO NAIL THOSE BASTARDS. IF THIS MEANS THEY'RE WILLING TO TAKE ME ON, I'M DELIGHTED.

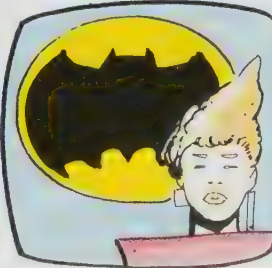
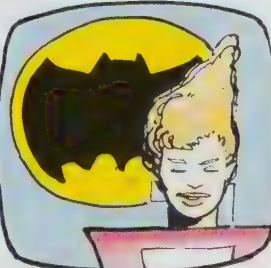
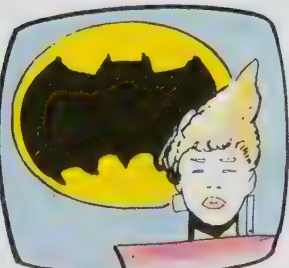


IRONICALLY, TODAY ALSO MARKS THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LAST RECORDED SIGHTING OF THE BATMAN. DEAD OR RETIRED, HIS FATE REMAINS UNKNOWN.

OUR YOUNGER VIEWERS WILL NOT REMEMBER THE BATMAN. A RECENT SURVEY SHOWS THAT MOST HIGH SCHOOLERS CONSIDER HIM A MYTH.

BUT REAL HE WAS. EVEN TODAY, DEBATE CONTINUES ON THE RIGHT AND WRONG OF HIS ONE-MAN WAR ON CRIME.

THIS REPORTER WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT HE'S ALIVE AND WELL, ENJOYING A CELEBRATORY DRINK IN THE COMPANY OF FRIENDS...



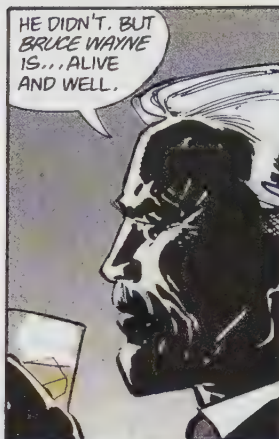


TO
BATMAN.

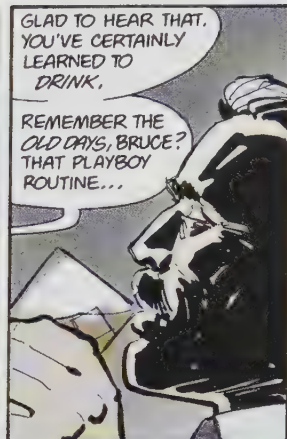
IT'S GOOD
THAT HE
RETIRED--
ISN'T IT?



I'M GRATEFUL
HE SURVIVED
RETIRING.



HE DIDN'T. BUT
BRUCE WAYNE
IS... ALIVE
AND WELL.



GLAD TO HEAR THAT.
YOU'VE CERTAINLY
LEARNED TO
DRINK.

REMEMBER THE
OLD DAYS, BRUCE?
THAT PLAYBOY
ROUTINE...

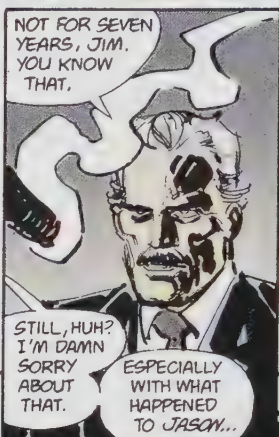


YOU WITH YOUR
GINGER ALE,
PRETENDING IT
WAS CHAMPAGNE,
FOOLING
EVERYBODY--
--ALMOST.



NOW--WELL,
I'D ALMOST
WORRY.

SPOKEN TO
DICK
LATELY?



NOT FOR SEVEN
YEARS, JIM.
YOU KNOW
THAT.

STILL, HUH?
I'M DAMN
SORRY
ABOUT
THAT.

ESPECIALLY
WITH WHAT
HAPPENED
TO JASON...



LET'S
CALL IT
A NIGHT,
JIM.



AS WE PART,
JIM SQUEEZES MY
SHOULDER AND
GRINS. "YOU JUST
NEED A WOMAN,"
HE SAYS.

...WHILE IN MY GUT
THE CREATURE WRITHES
AND SNARLS AND
TELLS ME WHAT I
NEED...

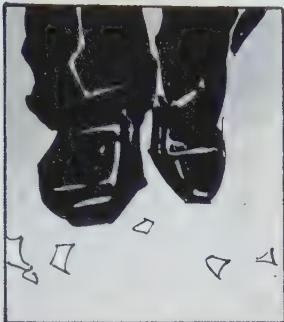
I LEAVE MY CAR IN
THE LOT. I CAN'T
STAND TO BE INSIDE
ANYTHING RIGHT NOW.
I WALK THE STREETS
OF THIS CITY I'M
LEARNING TO HATE, THE
CITY THAT'S GIVEN UP,
LIKE THE WHOLE
WORLD SEEMS TO
HAVE.

I'M A ZOMBIE. A
FLYING DUTCHMAN.
A DEAD MAN,
TEN YEARS DEAD...

I'LL FEEL BETTER IN THE MORNING. AT LEAST, I'LL FEEL IT LESS...



IT'S THE NIGHT--WHEN THE CITY'S SMELLS CALL OUT TO HIM, THOUGH I LIE BETWEEN SILK SHEETS IN A MILLION-DOLLAR MANSION MILES AWAY...



...WHEN A POLICE SIREN WAKES ME, AND, FOR A MOMENT, I FORGET THAT IT'S ALL OVER...



BUT BATMAN WAS A YOUNG MAN. IF IT WAS REVENGE HE WAS AFTER, HE'S TAKEN IT. IT'S BEEN FORTY YEARS SINCE HE WAS BORN...



...BORN HERE.

ONCE AGAIN, HE'S BROUGHT ME BACK--TO SHOW ME HOW LITTLE IT HAS CHANGED. IT'S OLDER, DIRTIER, BUT--

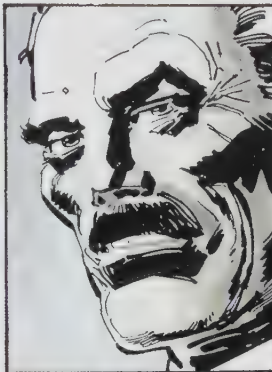
--IT COULD HAVE HAPPENED YESTERDAY.

IT COULD BE HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

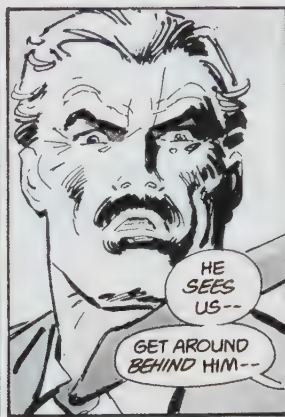
THEY COULD BE LYING AT YOUR FEET, TWITCHING, BLEEDING...



...AND THE MAN WHO STOLE ALL SENSE FROM YOUR LIFE, HE COULD BE STANDING...



...RIGHT OVER THERE...



HE SEES US--

GET AROUND BEHIND HIM--

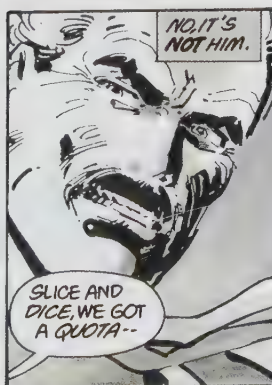


COME ON, HONEY, SLICE AND DICE--

--I DON'T KNOW, MAN. HE'S AWFUL BIG--

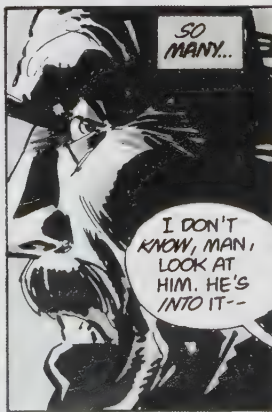
IT IS HIM, IT IS. AND WE KNOW SO MANY WAYS TO HURT HIM...

SO MANY LOVELY WAYS TO PUNISH HIM...



NO, IT'S NOT HIM.

SLICE AND DICE, WE GOT A QUOTA--



SO MANY...

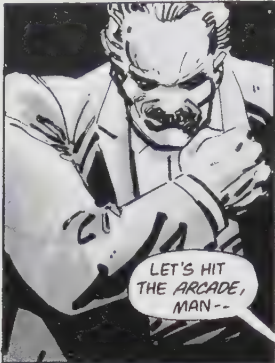
I DON'T KNOW, MAN, LOOK AT HIM. HE'S INTO IT--

NOT HIM. HE FLINCHED WHEN HE PULLED THE TRIGGER. HE WAS SICK AND GUILTY OVER WHAT HE DID.

ALL HE WANTED WAS MONEY. I WAS NAIVE ENOUGH TO THINK HIM THE LOWEST SORT OF MAN.

THESE--THESE ARE HIS CHILDREN. A PURER BREED...

... AND THIS WORLD IS THEIRS.

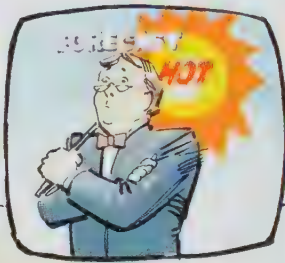
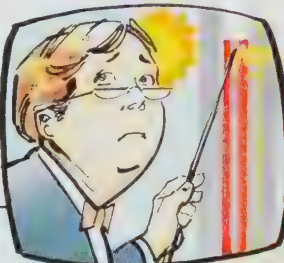
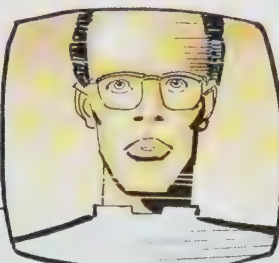
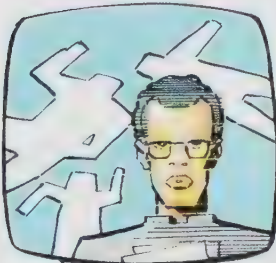


... BUTCHERY OF EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY. THE MUTANT ORGANIZATION IS BELIEVED TO HAVE COMMITTED THIS ATROCITY FOR MONEY THE FAMILY HAD...

... SOMETHING UNDER TWELVE DOLLARS. THIS IS CONSIDERED A DRUG-RELATED CRIME AT PRESENT, BUT SURELY THIS HEAT WAVE IS A FACTOR. RIGHT, DOC?

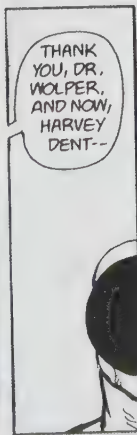
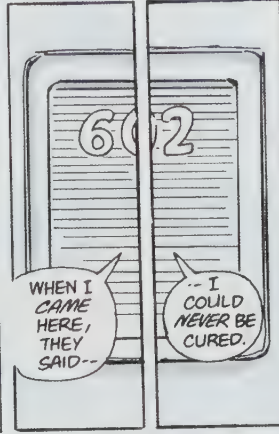
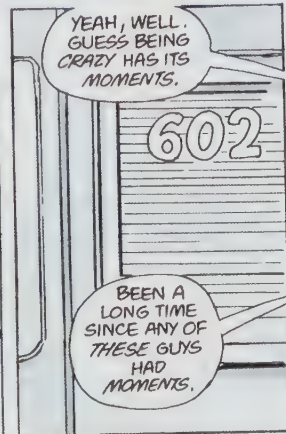
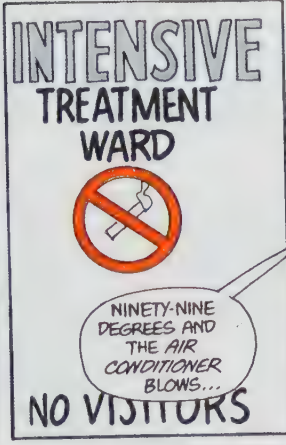
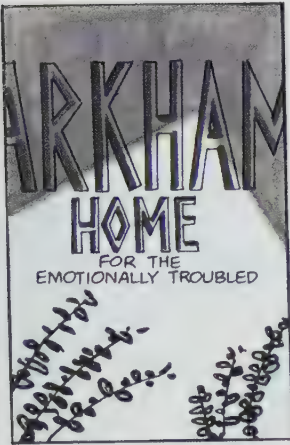
ABSOLUTELY, BILL. ROUGH MONTH IN THE BIG TOWN. RIGHT NOW THE MERCURY IS CLIMBING TO AN UNSEASONAL ONE HUNDRED AND THREE...

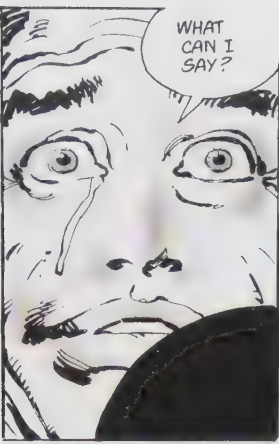
... AND IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER...



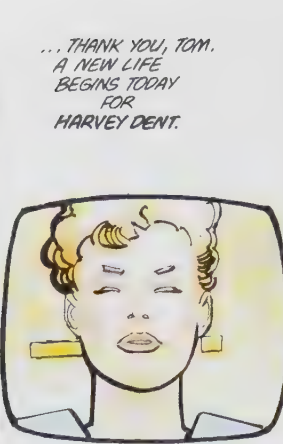
THIS JUST IN-- A DEAD CAT HAS BEEN FOUND STAPLED TO THE DOOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST THE REDEEMER... THE MUTANT GANG IS SUSPECTED...



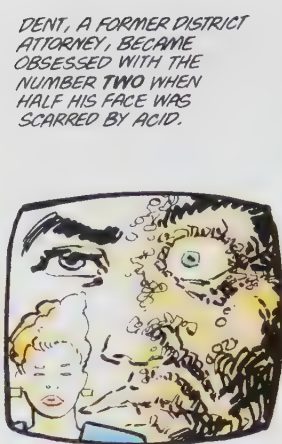




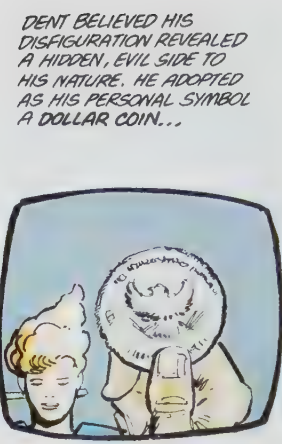
...ONE SIDE OF WHICH WAS DEFACED, TO REPRESENT THE WARRING SIDES OF HIS SPLIT-PERSONALITY. A FLIP OF THE COIN COULD MEAN LIFE OR DEATH FOR HIS VICTIMS.



DENT'S CRIMES WERE BRILLIANTLY PATHOLOGICAL, THE MOST HORRENDOUS OF WHICH WAS HIS LAST--



--THE KIDNAPPING AND RANSOMING OF SIAMESE TWINS, ONE OF WHOM HE ATTEMPTED TO MURDER EVEN AFTER THE RANSOM WAS PAID.



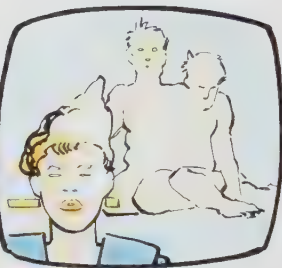
HE WAS APPREHENDED IN THE ACT BY GOTHAM'S FAMOUS VIGILANTE, THE BATMAN, AND COMMITTED TO ARKHAM ASYLUM TWELVE YEARS AGO.



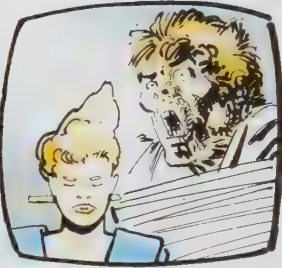
FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS DENT HAS BEEN TREATED BY DR. BARTHOLOMEW WOLPER FOR HIS PSYCHOSIS...



...WHILE NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING PLASTIC SURGEON DR. HERBERT WILLING DEDICATED HIMSELF TO RESTORING THE FACE OF HARVEY DENT.



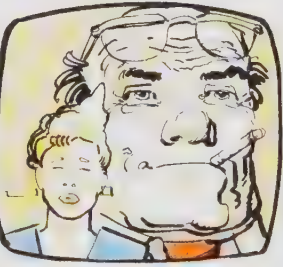
SPEAKING TODAY, BOTH DOCTORS WERE JUBILANT.



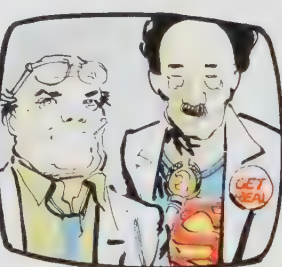
HARVEY'S READY TO LOOK AT THE WORLD AND SAY, "HEY--I'M OKAY."



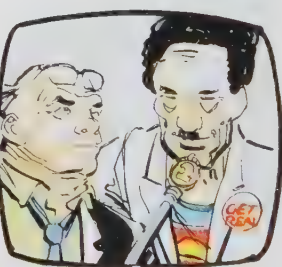
AND HE LOOKS GREAT.



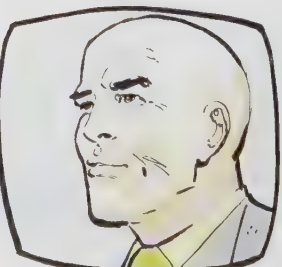
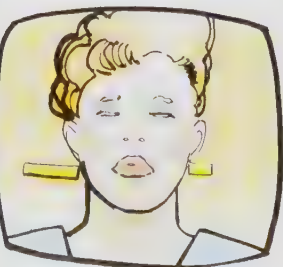
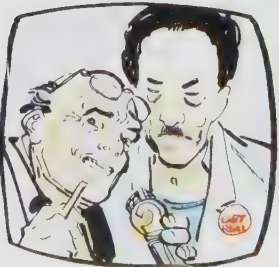
DENT READ A BRIEF STATEMENT TO THE MEDIA...



I DO NOT ASK GOTHAM CITY TO FORGIVE MY CRIMES. I MUST EARN THAT, BY DEDICATING MYSELF TO PUBLIC SERVICE.



FOR ME, THIS IS THE END OF A LONG NIGHTMARE...AND THE FIRST STEP ON THE LONG ROAD TO ABSOLUTION.

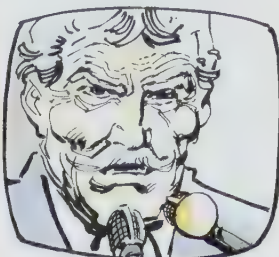
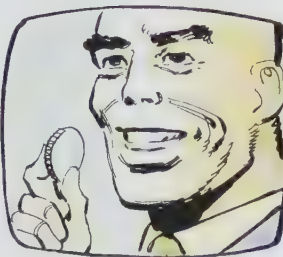
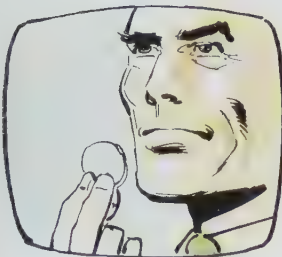


NEXT, DENT DREW FOND APPLAUSE BY PRODUCING A NEWLY-MINTED DOLLAR COIN.

IT WAS, OF COURSE, UNMARRIED.

BUT POLICE COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON'S REACTION TO DENT'S RELEASE WAS NOT ENTHUSIASTIC...

NO, I AM NOT SATISFIED. DR. WOLPER'S REPORT SEEMS OVERLY OPTIMISTIC--NOT TO MENTION SLOPPY.

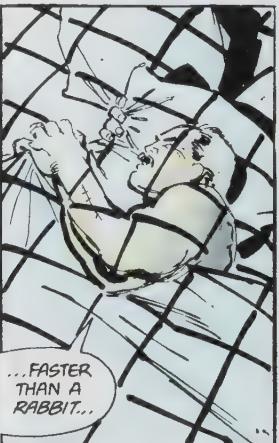
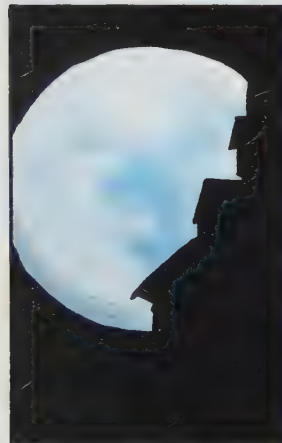


WHILE MILLIONAIRE BRUCE WAYNE, WHO SPONSORED DENT'S TREATMENT, HAD THIS TO SAY...

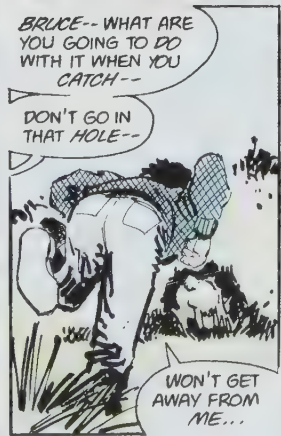
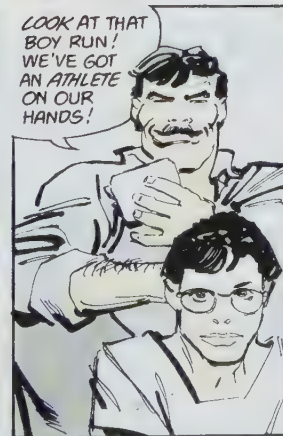
GORDON'S REMARKS SEEM OVERLY PESSIMISTIC--NOT TO MENTION RUDE.

THE COMMISSIONER IS AN EXCELLENT COP-- BUT, I THINK, A POOR JUDGE OF CHARACTER. WE MUST BELIEVE IN HARVEY DENT.

WE MUST BELIEVE THAT OUR PRIVATE DEMONS CAN BE DEFEATED...



...FASTER THAN A RABBIT...



LOOK AT THAT BOY RUN! WE'VE GOT AN ATHLETE ON OUR HANDS!

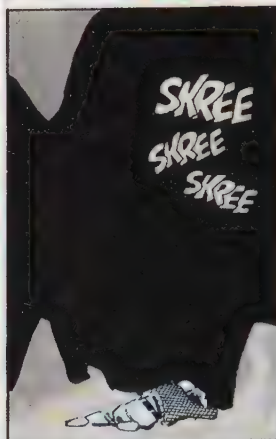
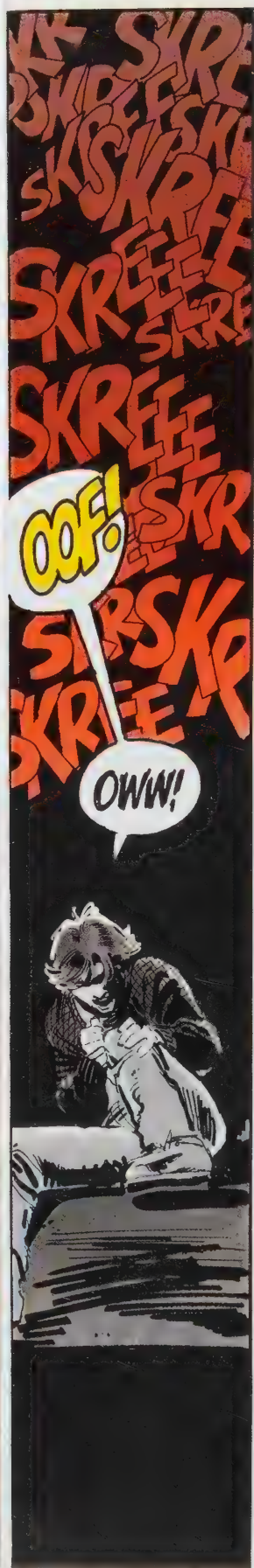
BRUCE-- WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH IT WHEN YOU CATCH--

DON'T GO IN THAT HOLE--

WON'T GET AWAY FROM ME...

BRUCE!

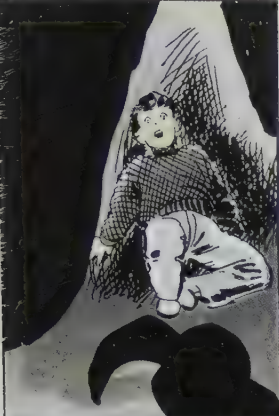
...FASTER THAN A RABBIT, MOM! JUST WATCH!



THEN...
...SOMETHING
SHUFFLES.
OUT OF SIGHT..
...SOMETHING
SUCKS THE
STALE AIR..
...AND
HISSES.



GLIDING WITH ANCIENT GRACE...



UNWILLING TO RETREAT AS HIS BROTHERS DID...



EYES GLEAMING, UNTOUCHED BY LOVE OR JOY OR SORROW...



BREATH HOT WITH THE TASTE OF FALLEN FOES... THE STENCH OF DEAD THINGS, DAMNED THINGS...



SURELY THE FIERCEST SURVIVOR-- THE PUREST WARRIOR...



GLARING, HATING...



...CLAIMING ME AS HIS OWN.



DREAMING...

I WAS ONLY SIX YEARS OLD WHEN THAT HAPPENED. WHEN I FIRST SAW THE CAVE...

... HUGE, EMPTY, SILENT AS A CHURCH, WAITING, AS THE BAT WAS WAITING.

AND NOW THE COBWEBS GROW AND THE DUST THICKENS IN HERE AS IT DOES IN ME--

--AND HE LAUGHS AT ME, CURSES ME. CALLS ME A FOOL. HE FILLS MY SLEEP, HE TRICKS ME, BRINGS ME HERE WHEN THE NIGHT IS LONG AND MY WILL IS WEAK. HE STRUGGLES RELENTLESSLY, HATEFULLY, TO BE FREE--

I WILL NOT LET HIM. I GAVE MY WORD.

FOR JASON.

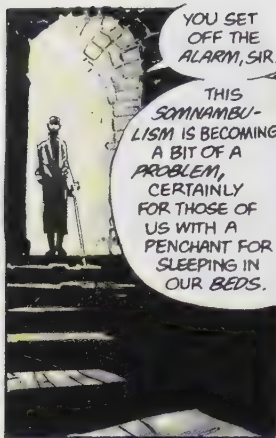
NEVER.

NEVER AGAIN.





MASTER
BRUCE?



YOU SET
OFF THE
ALARM, SIR.

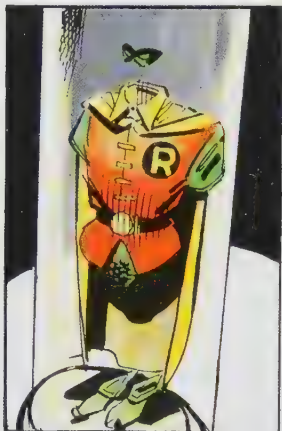
THIS
SOMNAMBULISM
IS BECOMING
A BIT OF A
PROBLEM,
CERTAINLY
FOR THOSE OF
US WITH A
PENCHANT FOR
SLEEPING IN
OUR BEDS.



IT'S THE
SPIRITS, I
SUSPECT.
TENDS TO
MAKE ONE
OVERLY
SENTIMENTAL.

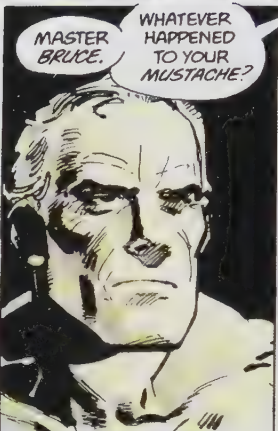


COME, SIR.
HARDLY THE
HOUR FOR
ANTIQUES,
IS IT?



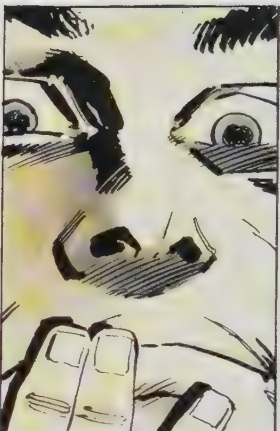
... HARDLY,
ALFRED.
SORRY TO
WAKE
YOU.

IT IS
HALF
PAST
THREE
...



MASTER
BRUCE.

WHATEVER
HAPPENED
TO YOUR
MUSTACHE?



FOR ME, THIS IS THE
END OF A LONG NIGHT-
MARE... AND THE FIRST
STEP ON THE LONG ROAD
TO ABSOLUTION.

... THOSE WERE THE LAST
WORDS SPOKEN IN
PUBLIC BY HARVEY
DENT BEFORE HIS
DISAPPEARANCE
THIS MORNING.

WHILE POLICE COMMISSIONER
GORDON ISSUED AN
ALL POINTS BULLETIN FOR
DENT, ONE VOICE WAS
RAISED IN PROTEST...

... THAT OF
DR. BARTHOLOMEW
WOLPER, DENT'S
PSYCHIATRIST...



SO--WHAT
DO YOU THINK?

I THINK IT'S
TOO DAMN
HOT--

--AND I
THINK HE
SHOULD SEE
IT OR FOLD.



GORDON'S
REACTION IS
ONE OF
TEXT BOOK
HYSTERIA...

I MEAN DENT
--NOT DIP
STICK HERE.

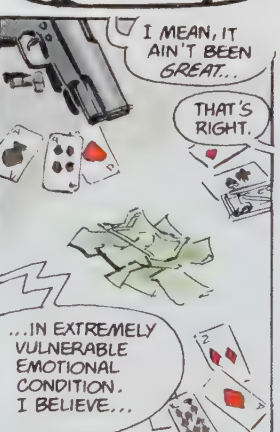
SO DO I.
OUGHTTA
SEE IT OR
FOLD.



WE BEEN
GETTING BY
WITHOUT
HIM.

U/H HUH.

...AND
CHARACTERISTIC
INSENSITIVITY. HARVEY,
ON THE OTHER HAND,
IS AN EXTREMELY
SENSITIVE MAN...



I MEAN, IT
AIN'T BEEN
GREAT...

THAT'S
RIGHT.

...IN EXTREMELY
VULNERABLE
EMOTIONAL
CONDITION.
I BELIEVE...

...AND WE MADE SOME GREAT SCORES WITH OLD "FACE"...

NO DENYIN' IT.

NUTS. I'M FOLDING.

...THAT HE HAS SOUGHT SOME MUCH-NEEDED PRIVACY...

BOUT TIME.

YEAH.

HARVEY NEEDS OUR SUPPORT--OUR CONCERN...

WHO THE HELL--

...NOT TO BE HUNTED DOWN LIKE SOME WILD

KLICK

IS THAT WHO I--

UH HUM.

GOING FOR A GUN--

I DON'T THINK SO...

I'LL SEE IT AND RAISE.

...FOURTEEN CASES OF HEAT PROSTRATION, AS THE TEMPERATURE SOARED A RECORD-BREAKING TWELVE DEGREES PAST THE ONE HUNDRED MARK.



BUT THERE IS HOPE, FOLKS-- IN THE FORM OF A COLD FRONT CHARGING FROM THE MIDWEST.

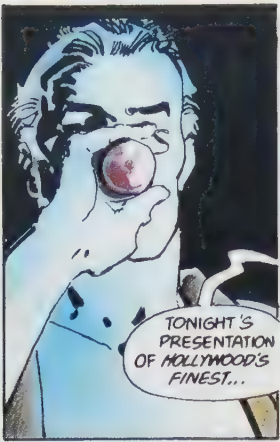
IT MAY REACH US AS EARLY AS TONIGHT...

THAT WILL BE ALL, MASTER BRUCE? I'M HOPING THAT THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE WAYNE FAMILY SHANT FACE AN EMPTY WINE CELLAR.

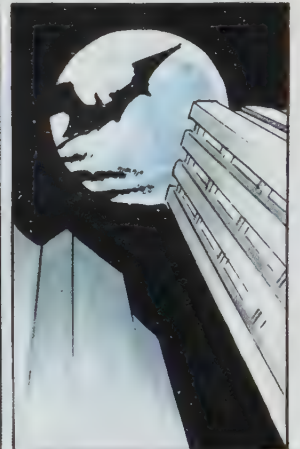
THOUGH GIVEN YOUR SOCIAL SCHEDULE OF LATE, THE PROSPECTS OF THERE BEING A NEXT GENERATION--

THAT WILL BE ALL, ALFRED. GOOD NIGHT.

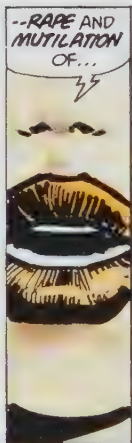
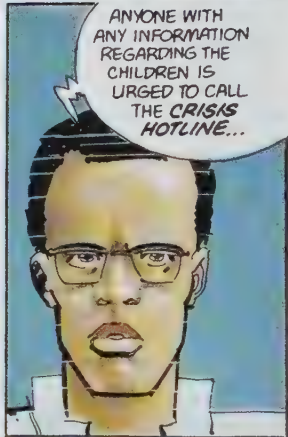
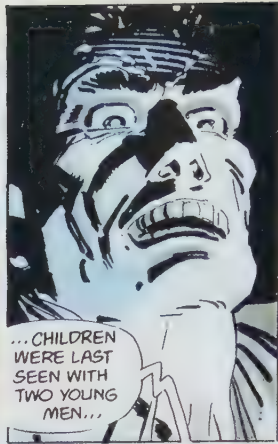




YOU LOVED IT SO MUCH...YOU JUMPED AND DANCED LIKE A FOOL...YOU REMEMBER...





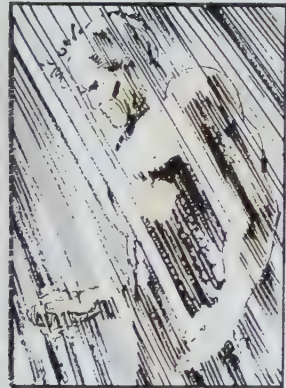


THE
TIME
HAS
COME.

YOU
KNOW
IT IN
YOUR
SOUL.

FOR I
AM YOUR
SOUL...

YOU
CANNOT
ESCAPE
ME...



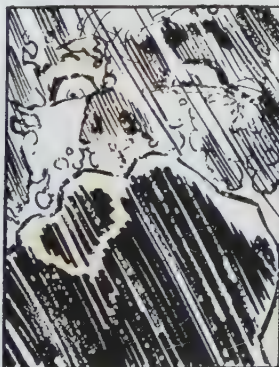
YOU ARE PUNY,
YOU ARE SMALL--



YOU ARE NOTHING--A HOLLOW
SHELL, A RUSTY TRAP THAT
CANNOT HOLD ME--



SMOLDERING, I BURN YOU--
BURNING YOU, I FLARE, HOT
AND BRIGHT AND FIERCE
AND BEAUTIFUL--



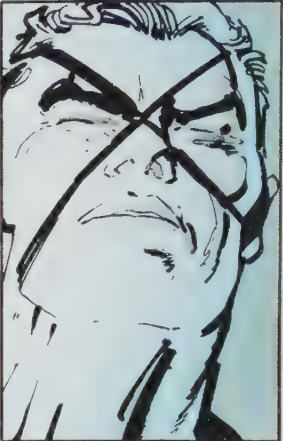
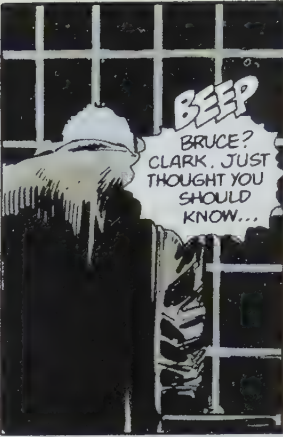
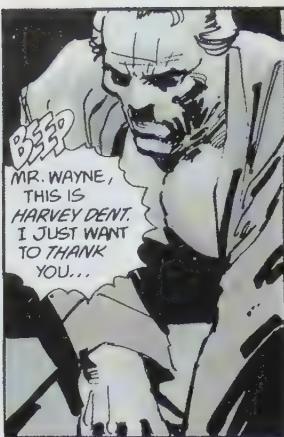
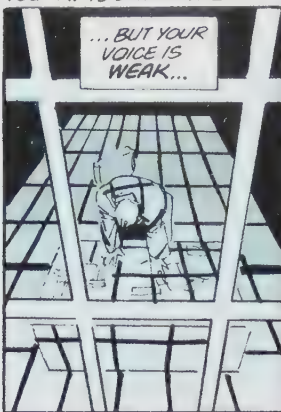
YOU CANNOT STOP ME--NOT
WITH WINE OR VOIMS OR
THE WEIGHT OF AGE--



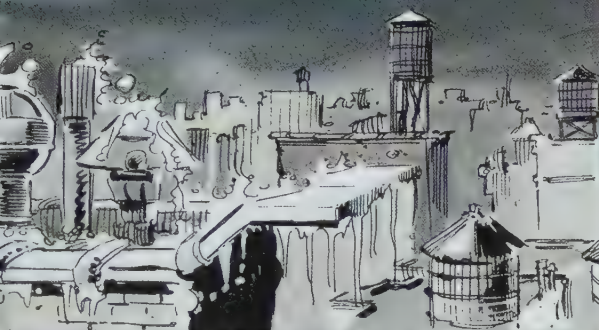
YOU CANNOT STOP ME BUT
STILL YOU TRY-- STILL
YOU RUN--



YOU TRY TO DROWN ME OUT...

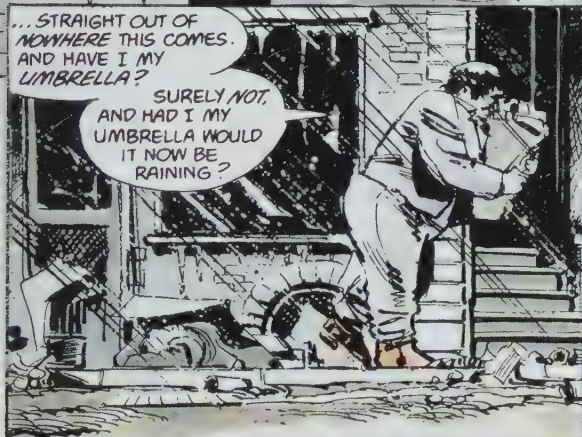


RRRRMMMMBBBLLLLL



...POWER LINES ARE
DOWN ALL OVER THE
SUBURBS. IT'S A MEAN
ONE-- AND IT'S HEADED
STRAIGHT FOR
GOTHAM.

LIKE THE
WRATH OF GOD
IT'S HEADED
FOR GOTHAM...



...STRAIGHT OUT OF
NOWHERE THIS COMES.
AND HAVE I MY
UMBRELLA?

SURELY NOT,
AND HAD I MY
UMBRELLA WOULD
IT NOW BE
RAINING?



SURELY
NOT--

HEY,
MOMMIE...



...COME IN
HERE WHERE
IT'S WARM.

I NEED
YOU,
MOMMIE.



MAKE ME
FEEL
SAFE.



OH NO
PLEASE...



PLEASE
GOD
NO--

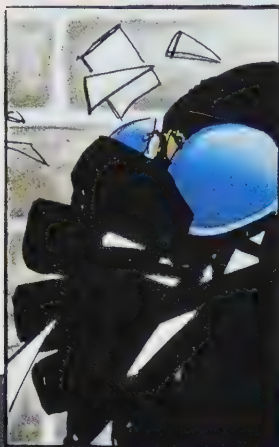


TALK
SOFT...

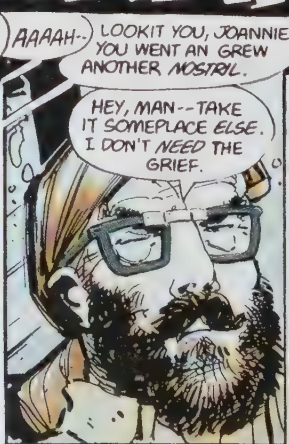
KRE
SS
SHHH

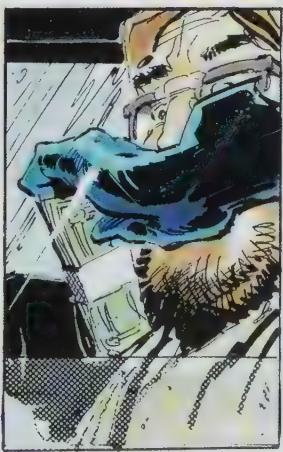
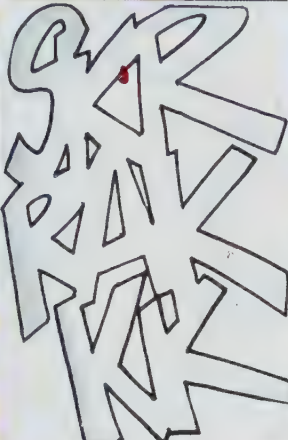


KRE
SS
SHHH



RMBL KKKRRRAKKK







COME ON, MICHELLE--

-- WE'LL CUT THROUGH THE ARCADE



BUT, CARRIE-- NOBODY COMES HERE. NOT ANYMORE.

BRAD SAYS HE SAW THE MUTANTS HERE

CHILL OUT, MICHELLE. IT'S ONLY A BLOCK.

AND I FIGURE I DON'T MIND MY NOTES GETTING ALL WET...

JUST LIKE I FIGURE I DID DO DOUBLE STUDY HALL FOR FUN!

SO YOU FLUNK THE CHEM TEST. SO WHAT? YOUR COMPUTER SCORES'LL BRING YOUR GRADE POINT AVERAGE BACK UP.

AND BRAD SAID-- I KNOW, MICHELLE.



BUT--

BUT EVEN MUTANTS'D KNOW TO GO HOME IN THE RAIN, AND BESIDES--



--IT'S TOO BRIGHT HERE FOR TROUBLE.



DON'T GO ALL BILLY, MICHELLE. IT'S JUST THE STORM.

CARRIE...

LIGHTS'LL COME BACK ON...



SEE? THEY--



NO. IT WAS JUST LIGHTNING...



CHICK CHICK CHICK



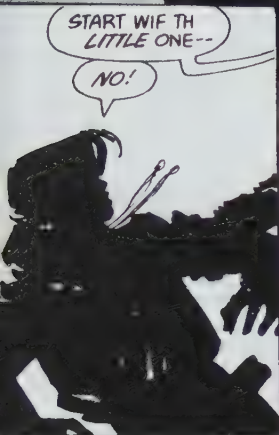
CHICK CHICK CHICK



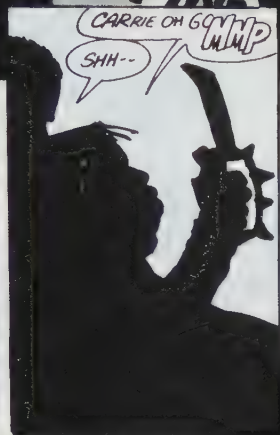
CHICK CHICK CHICK

CHICK CHICK CHICK

COME HERE COME HERE COME HERE, CHICKEN LEGS--



START WIF TH
LITTLE ONE--
NO!

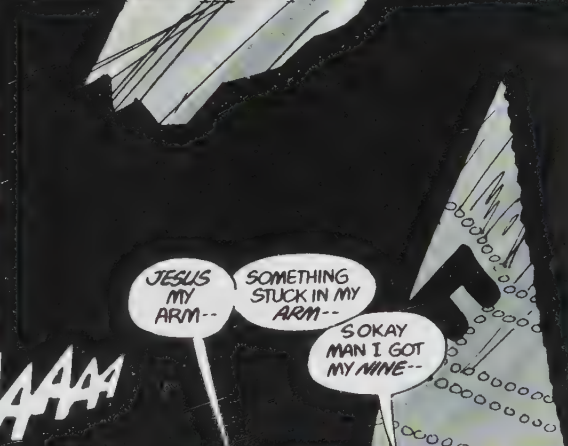


CARRIE OH GOYMP
SHH--



SLICE
AND DICE
MAN SLICE
AND DICE--

THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK



JESUS
MY
ARM--

SOMETHING
STUCK IN MY
ARM--

SOKAY
MAN I GOT
MY NINE--



ANYTHING
MOVES I
SHOOT--

WH...

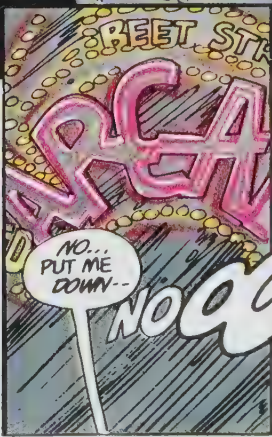


AAAH--



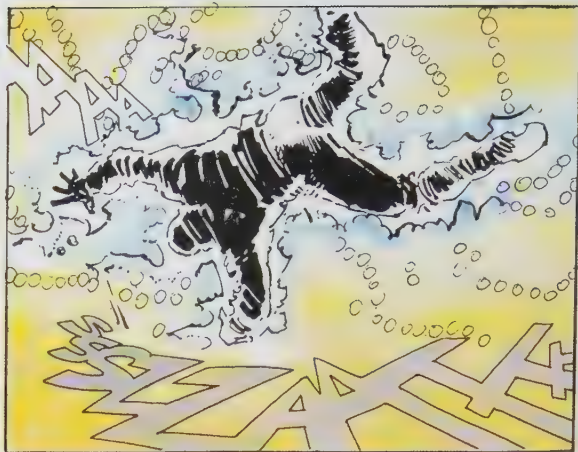
SPIKE--
WHAT'S
HE DO--

WHA--



NO...
PUT ME
DOWN--

NO

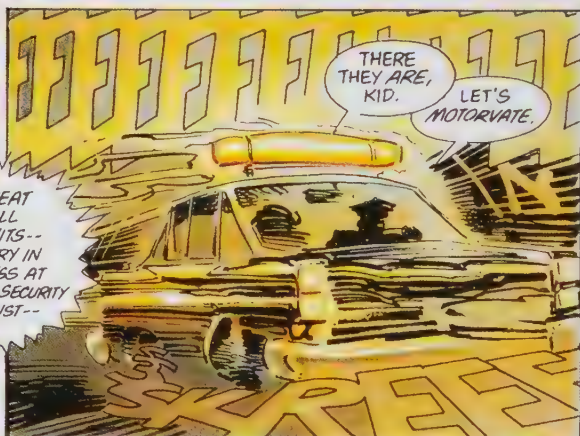
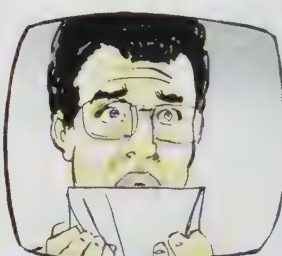
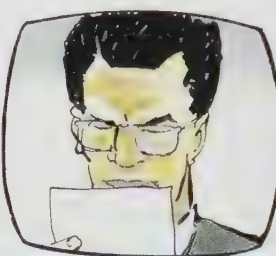
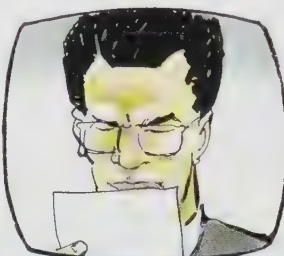


... BREAKTHROUGH IN
HAIR REPLACEMENT
TECHNIQUES, AND
THAT'S THE--
EXCUSE ME...

I'VE JUST BEEN
HANDED THIS BULLETIN--
A LARGE, BAT-LIKE
CREATURE HAS BEEN
SIGHTED ON GOTHAM'S
SOUTH SIDE.

IT IS SAID TO
HAVE ATTACKED AND
SERIOUSLY INJURED
THREE CAT-BURGLARS
WHO HAVE PLAUGED
THAT NEIGHBORHOOD

YOU
DON'T
SUPPOSE...



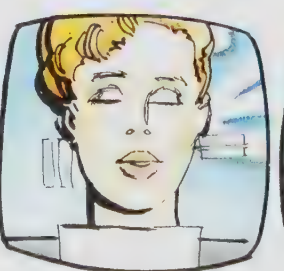
REPEAT
-- ALL
UNITS--
ROBBERY IN
PROGRESS AT
GOTHAM SECURITY
TRUST--

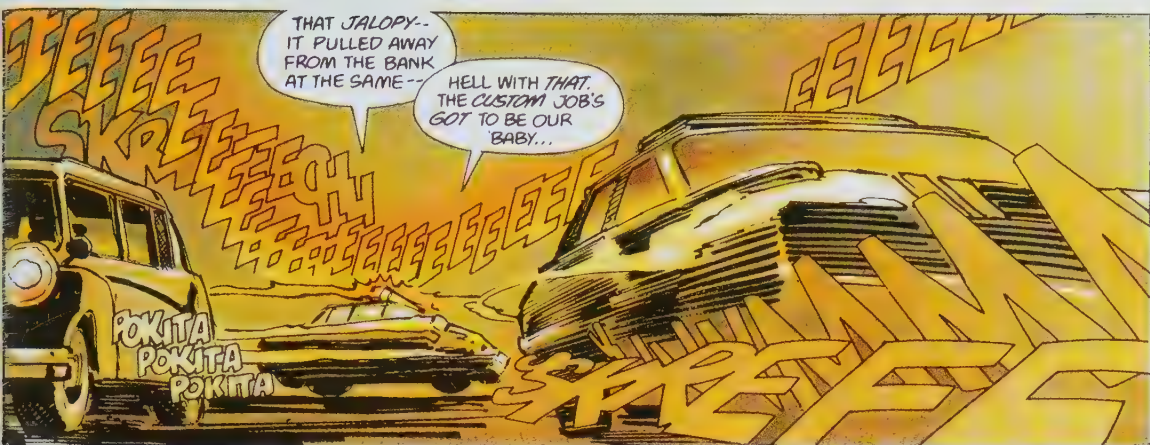
THIS JUST IN--
TWO YOUNG CHILDREN
WHO DISAPPEARED THIS
MORNING HAVE BEEN
FOUND UNHARMED IN
A RIVERSIDE
WAREHOUSE.

AN ANONYMOUS TIP
LED POLICE TO THE
WAREHOUSE, WHERE THEY
FOUND THE CHILDREN
WITH SIX MEMBERS
OF THE MUTANT
GANG.

ALL SIX ARE SUFFERING
FROM MULTIPLE CUTS,
CONTUSIONS, AND
BROKEN BONES. THEY
WERE RUSHED TO
GOTHAM GENERAL
HOSPITAL.

THE CHILDREN
DESCRIBED AN ATTACK
ON THE GANG MEMBERS
BY A HUGE MAN
DRESSED LIKE
DRACULA...



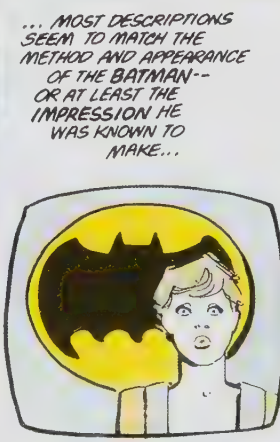
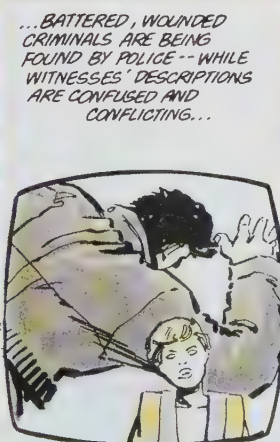
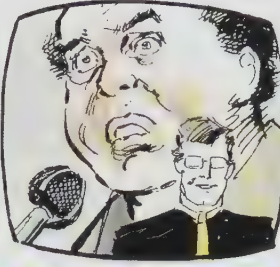
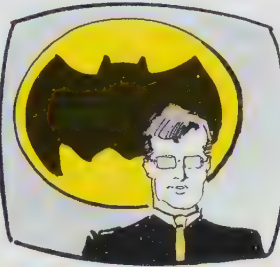
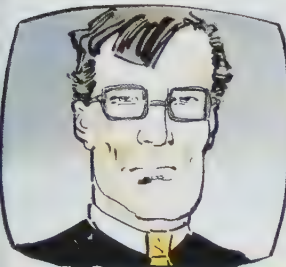


POLICE PHONE LINES ARE JAMMED WITH CITIZENS DESCRIBING WHAT SEEMS TO BE A SIEGE ON GOTHAM'S UNDERWORLD...

...BY THE BATMAN.

ALTHOUGH SEVERAL RESCUED VICTIMS--TO-BE HAVE DESCRIBED THE VIGILANTE TO NEWS TWELVE REPORTERS...

... COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON HAS DECLINED TO COMMENT ON WHETHER OR NOT THIS MIGHT MEAN THE RETURN OF THE BATMAN...



THIS SHOULD
BE AGONY.

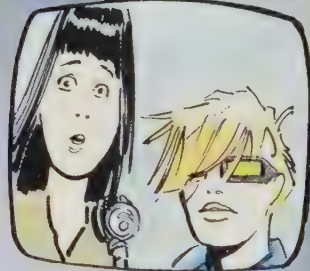
I SHOULD BE A MASS OF
ACHING MUSCLE--BROKEN,
SPENT, UNABLE TO MOVE.

AND, WERE I
AN OLDER
MAN, I SURELY
WOULD...

...WILD ANIMAL.
GROWLS. SNARLS.
WEREWOLF.
SURELY.



...MONSTER! LIKE
WITH FANGS AND
WINGS AND IT
CAN FLY--

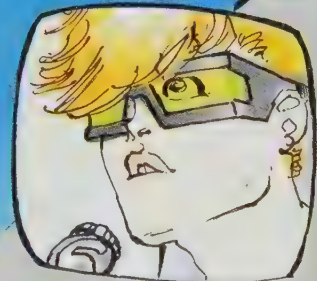


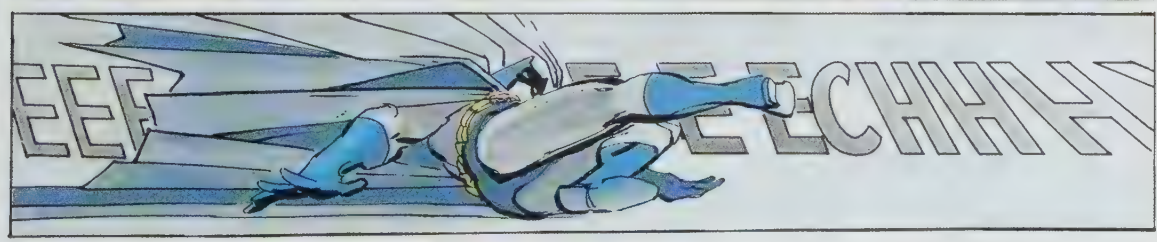
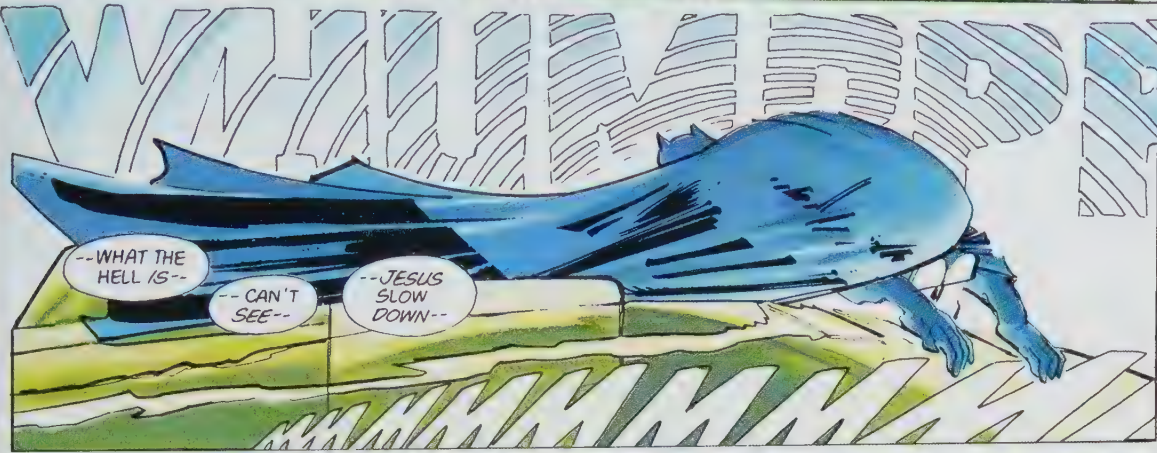
... BUT I'M A MAN
OF THIRTY-- OF
TWENTY AGAIN.

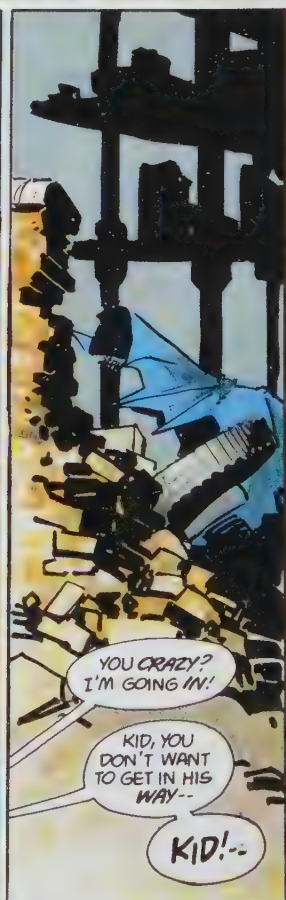
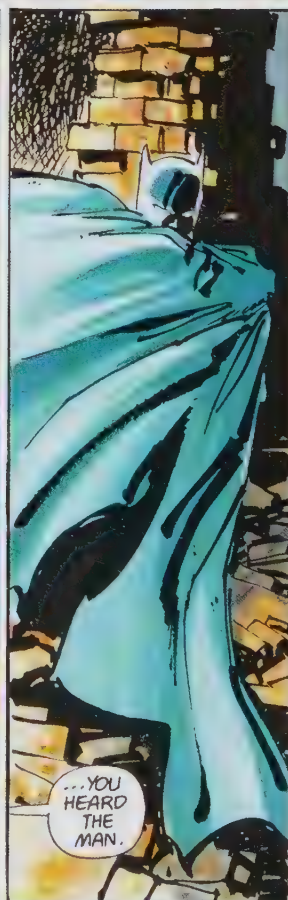
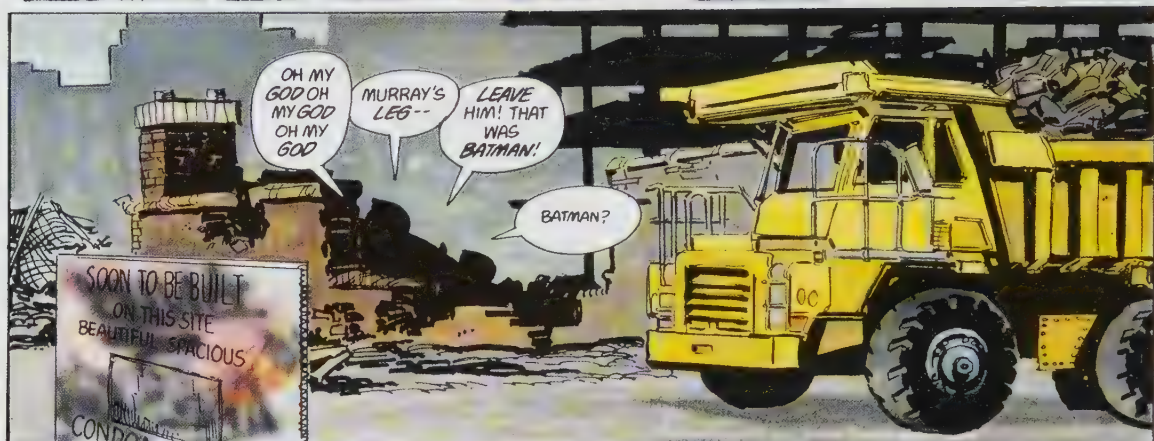
THE RAIN ON
MY CHEST IS A
BAPTISM--

I'M
BORN
AGAIN...

REALITY CHECK,
MI CHELLE. TALK ABOUT
COMPOSURE. TOTAL LACK OF.
HE'S A MAN-- ABOUT--
TWELVE FEET TALL--









... COULDN'T
BE BATMAN.
TURK SAID
HE KILLED
BATMAN.

TURK
SAYS
LOTS

FOUR OF
THEM. ONE
IN THE CAR,
LEG BROKEN,
IN SHOCK.



HARD
TO SEE--

QUIET!

OTHER
THREE ARE
ARMED--
AND SMART
ENOUGH TO
HANG CLOSE
TOGETHER.

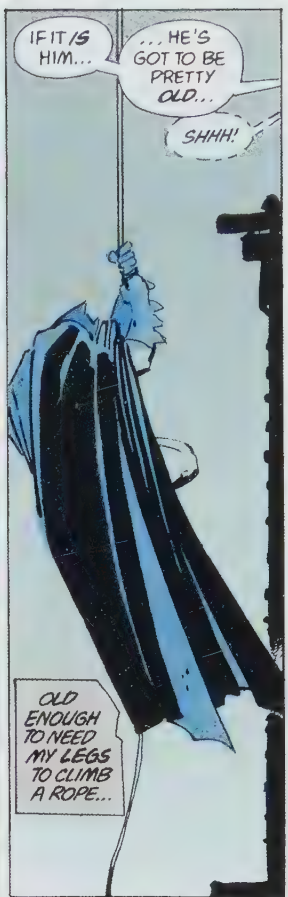


BUT THEY'RE
SCARED.

FLOOR'S
WEAK.
DOESN'T
FEEL SAFE--

SO LIVE
DANGEROUS-
LY.

AND SHUT
UP.



IF IT'S
HIM...

... HE'S
GOT TO BE
PRETTY
OLD...

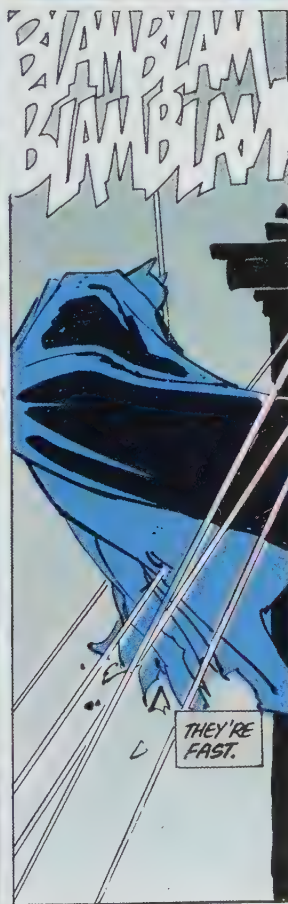
SHHH!

OLD
ENOUGH
TO NEED
MY LEGS
TO CLIMB
A ROPE...

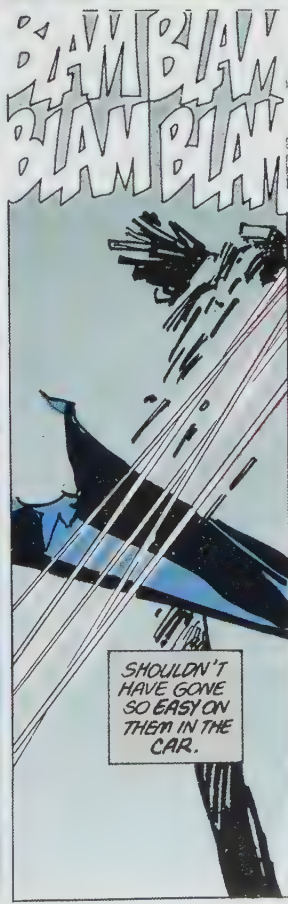


OVER
THERE--

FIRE
LOW--



THEY'RE
FAST.



SHOULDN'T
HAVE GONE
SO EASY ON
THEM IN THE
CAR.

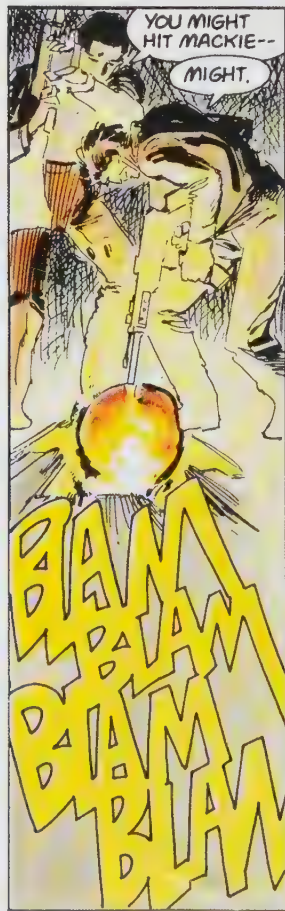
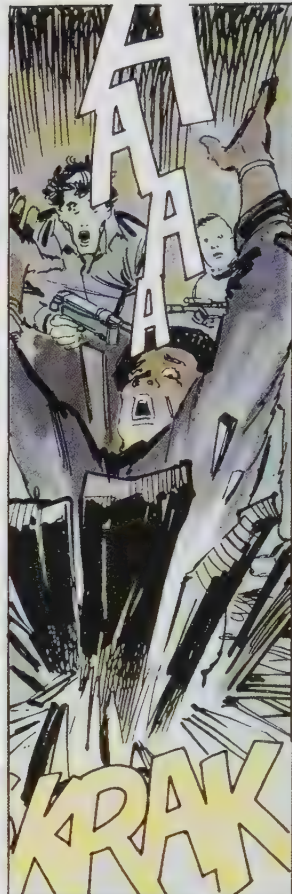


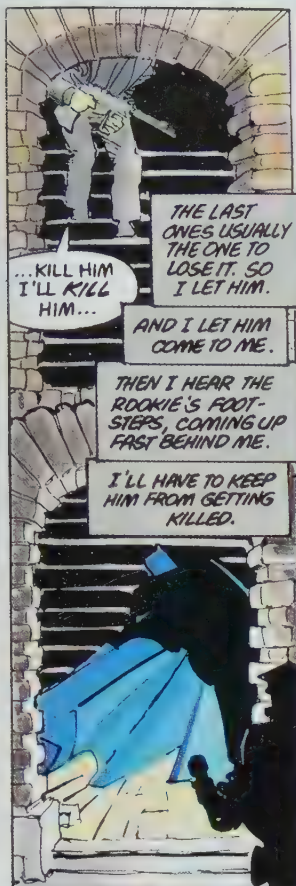
WE GET
HIM?

HARD
TO TELL.
HAVE TO
ASSUME
WE DIDN'T.

WAIT.
WHAT'S THAT
SOUND...

GGGRRRR





THE LAST ONES USUALLY THE ONE TO LOSE IT. SO I LET HIM.

AND I LET HIM COME TO ME.

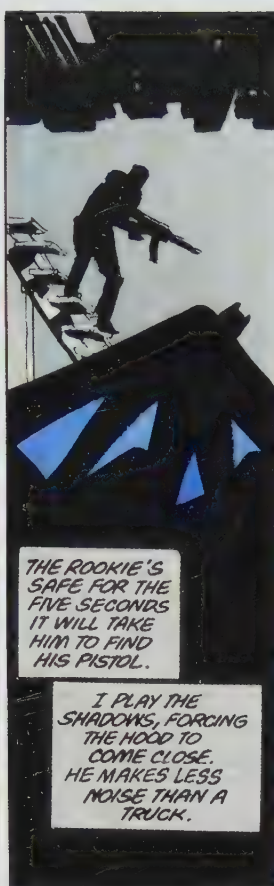
THEN I HEAR THE ROOKIE'S FOOTSTEPS, COMING UP FAST BEHIND ME.

I'LL HAVE TO KEEP HIM FROM GETTING KILLED.



EVERYBODY FREEZ

OWW!



THE ROOKIE'S SAFE FOR THE FIVE SECONDS IT WILL TAKE HIM TO FIND HIS PISTOL.

I PLAY THE SHADOWS, FORCING THE HOOD TO COME CLOSE. HE MAKES LESS NOISE THAN A TRUCK.



THERE ARE SEVEN WORKING DEFENSES FROM THIS POSITION.

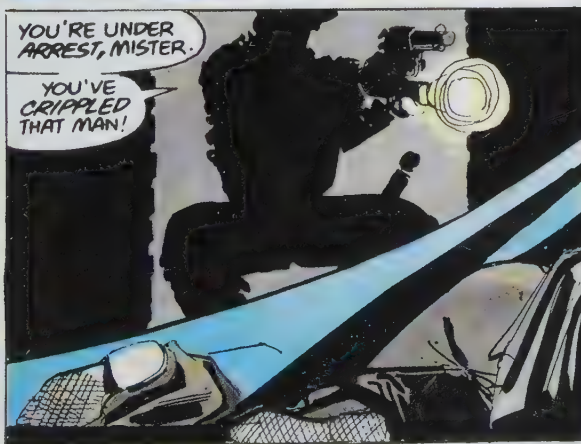
THREE OF THEM DISARM WITH MINIMAL CONTACT.

THREE OF THEM KILL.

THE OTHER--



-- HURTS.



YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, MISTER.

YOU'VE CRIPPLED THAT MAN!



HE'S YOUNG. HE'LL PROBABLY WALK AGAIN.

BUT HE'LL STAY SCARED-- WON'T YOU, PUNK?

JESUS SWEET JESUS...

LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

CIGARETTES, NO WONDER YOU'RE SO SLOW...

OH CHRIST I CAN'T STAND IT...

I MEAN IT, MAN--GET AWAY FROM HIM--

I'LL SHOOT--

DON'T TRY IT, KID. HE'S BEING PATIENT WITH YOU AS IT IS.

NICE TO HAVE YOU BACK, BATS.

GO TO THEIR CAR, KID. FETCH THE PAYROLL.

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS...

IT ISN'T IN THE CAR. IT'S NOWHERE AROUND HERE.

PILLS. NO END TO YOUR BAD HABITS...

PPPLEASE...

Y'KNOW, BATS-- I SAW YOU ONCE-- BACK WHEN I WAS WORKING THE EAST END.

I WAS A ROOKIE-- LIKE SHIMLUK FACE HERE.

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.

AT THE BANK-- WAS THERE A SECOND CAR?

CAR? YEAH. AN OLD JALOPY. DIDN'T THINK--

YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO.

ANYWAY, IT WAS A RAINY NIGHT, JUST LIKE THIS. I WAS WALKIN' MY BEAT--

--I MEAN, I WAS JUST A KID BACK THEN...

...AND I SAW THIS GUY DRAW A GUN ON--

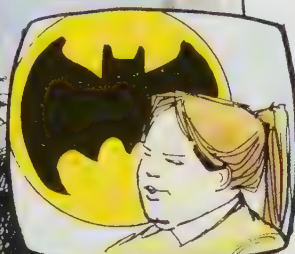
TELL GORDON WE HAVE TO TALK.

SURE THING, BATS. BUT HOW'S HE SPOSED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH--

OH, YEAH! NOW I REMEMBER...



...ONE ALMOST EXPECTS TO SEE THE BAT-SIGNAL STRIKING THE SIDE OF ONE OF GOTHAM'S TWIN TOWERS. YES, HE GAVE US QUITE A NIGHT...



SURE KEPT THE HOSPITALS BUSY.

YES, MORRIE. BUT I THINK IT'S A MISTAKE...

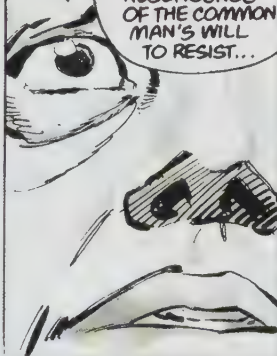


...TO THINK OF THIS IN PURELY POLITICAL TERMS...



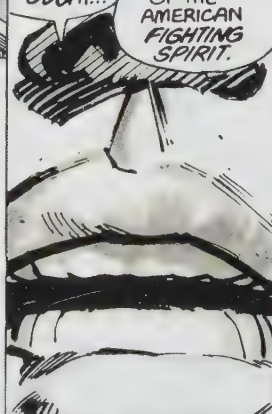
BB...

RATHER I REGARD IT AS A SYMBOLIC RESURGENCE OF THE COMMON MAN'S WILL TO RESIST...



BBBAT...

A REBIRTH OF THE AMERICAN FIGHTING SPIRIT.



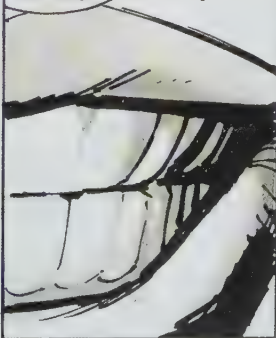
BATMAN.

EASE UP, LANA. THE ONLY THING HE SIGNIFIES...

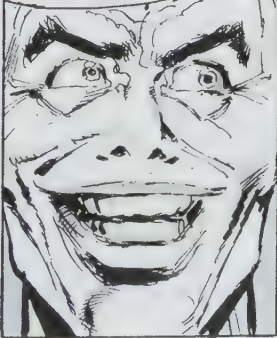


...IS AN ABERRANT PSYCHOTIC FORCE--

DARLINGS.

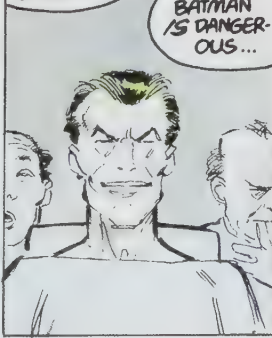


--MORALLY BANKRUPT, POLITICALLY HAZARDOUS, REACTIONARY PARANOID--



--A DANGER TO EVERY CITIZEN OF GOTHAM!

PERHAPS, MORRIE. PERHAPS THE BATMAN IS DANGEROUS...

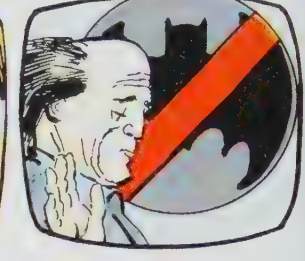


...BUT HE'S HARDLY AS DANGEROUS AS HIS ENEMIES, IS HE? TAKE HARVEY DENT, JUST TO PICK A NAME...

THAT'S CUTE, LANA, BUT HARDLY APPROPRIATE, AND HARDLY FAIR TO AS TROUBLED A SOUL AS HARVEY DENT'S.

HE CERTAINLY IS TROUBLE FOR HIS VICTIMS.

WAS, LANA. WAS. IF HARVEY DENT IS RETURNING TO CRIME -- AND PLEASE NOTE THAT I SAID IF -- IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT HE'S NOT IN CONTROL OF HIMSELF.



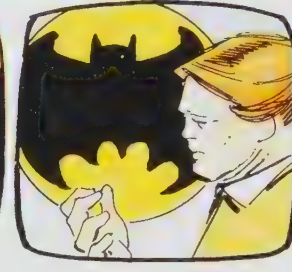
AND BATMAN IS?

CERTAINLY, HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT HE'S DOING. HIS KIND OF SOCIAL FASCIST ALWAYS DOES.

THEN WHY DO YOU CALL HIM PSYCHOTIC? BECAUSE YOU LIKE TO USE THAT WORD FOR ANY MOTIVE THAT'S TOO BIG FOR YOUR LITTLE MIND? BECAUSE HE FIGHTS CRIME INSTEAD OF PERPETRATING IT?

YOU DON'T CALL EXCESSIVE FORCE A CRIME? HOW ABOUT ASSAULT, FAT LADY? OR BREAKING AND ENTERING? HUM? TRY RECKLESS EN

DING

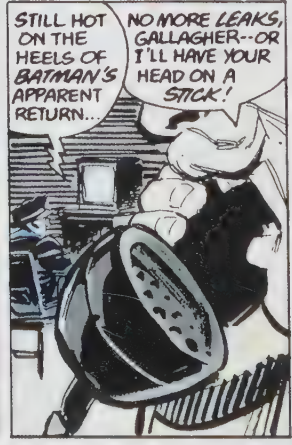
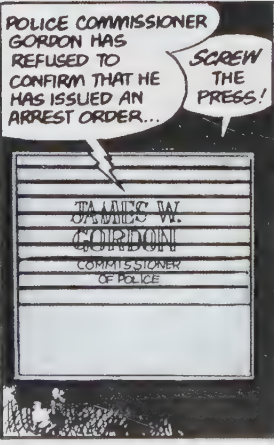
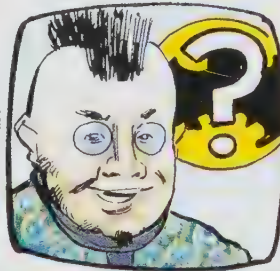
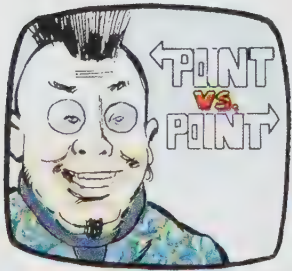


SORRY, MORRIE, BUT WE'RE OUT OF TIME -- THOUGH I'M SURE THIS DEBATE IS FAR FROM OVER. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO CAME IN LATE, TODAY'S POINT VERSUS POINT...

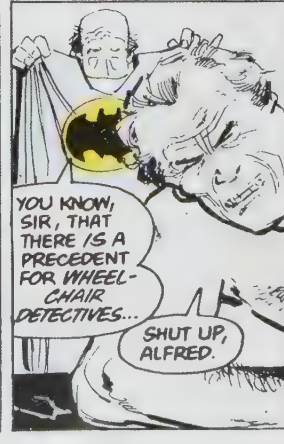
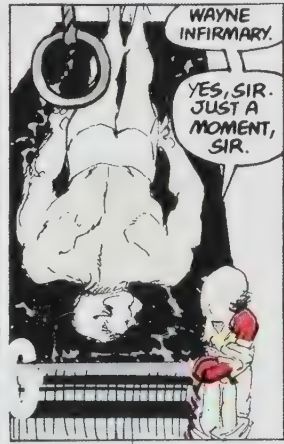
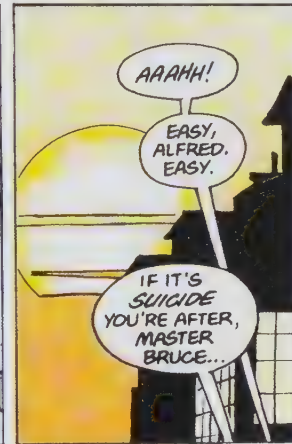
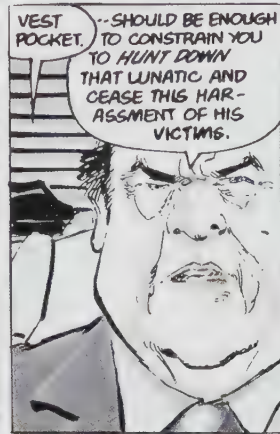
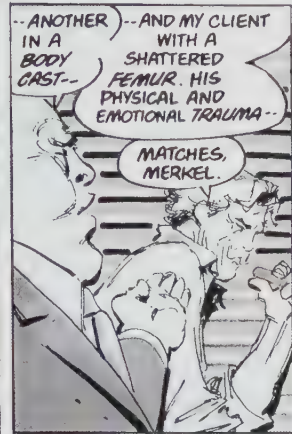
... WAS CONCERNED WITH LAST NIGHT'S ATTACK ON DOZENS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY HAVE BEEN CRIMINALS BY A PARTY OR PARTIES WHO MAY HAVE BEEN THE BATMAN.

ALSO OF CONCERN IS THIS MORNING'S ANNOUNCEMENT BY POLICE MEDIA RELATIONS DIRECTOR LOUIS GALLAGHER THAT A DEFACED DOLLAR COIN, WAS FOUND ON ONE OF THE SUSPECTS...

... IN LAST NIGHT'S PAYROLL ROBBERY. THOSE WHO REMEMBER THE CRIMES OF HARVEY DENT WILL RECOGNIZE THIS AS HIS TRADEMARK.



COMMISSIONER, IF YOU PLEASE...

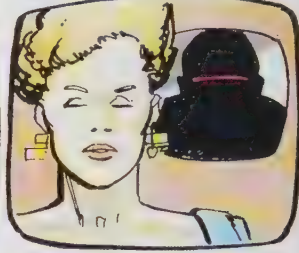


WE WILL KILL THE OLD MAN GORDON. HIS WOMEN WILL WEEP FOR HIM. WE WILL CHOP HIM. WE WILL GRIND HIM. WE WILL BATHE IN HIS BLOOD.

I MYSELF WILL KILL THE FOOL BATMAN. I WILL RIP THE MEAT FROM HIS BONES AND SUCK THEM DRY. I WILL EAT HIS HEART AND DRAG HIS BODY THROUGH THE STREET.

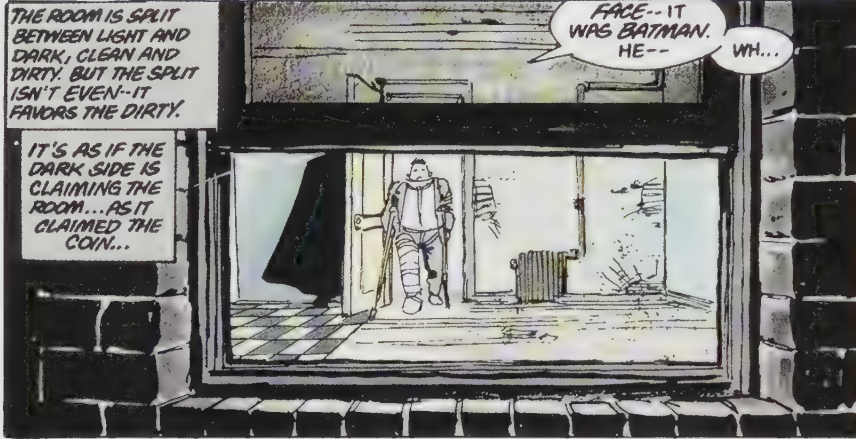
DON'T CALL US A GANG. DON'T CALL US CRIMINALS. WE ARE THE LAW. WE ARE THE FUTURE. GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO THE MUTANTS. SOON THE WORLD WILL BE OURS.

WITH THAT VIDEOTAPED MESSAGE, THE MUTANT LEADER-- WHOSE NAME AND FACE REMAIN A SECRET-- HAS DECLARED WAR ON THE CITY OF GOTHAM... AND ON ITS MOST FAMOUS CHAMPION...



THE ROOM IS SPLIT BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARK, CLEAN AND DIRTY. BUT THE SPLIT ISN'T EVEN-- IT FAVORS THE DIRTY.

IT'S AS IF THE DARK SIDE IS CLAIMING THE ROOM... AS IT CLAIMED THE COIN...



FACE-- IT WAS BATMAN. HE--

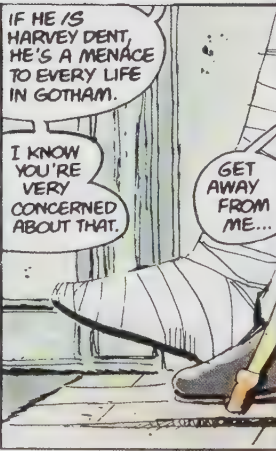
WH...



YOUR BOSS LEFT. HE KNEW I'D TRACK HIM.



SLAM



IF HE'S HARVEY DENT, HE'S A MENACE TO EVERY LIFE IN GOTHAM.

I KNOW YOU'RE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THAT.

GET AWAY FROM ME...



YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW, SOONER OR LATER.

IF IT'S LATER--



--I WON'T MIND.



NO!... STAY BACK--



--I GOT RIGHTS--





YOU'VE GOT RIGHTS.

LOTS OF RIGHTS.



SOMETIMES I COUNT THEM JUST TO MAKE MYSELF FEEL CRAZY.



BUT RIGHT NOW YOU'VE GOT A PIECE OF GLASS SHOVED INTO A MAJOR ARTERY IN YOUR ARM.

RIGHT NOW YOU'RE BLEEDING TO DEATH.

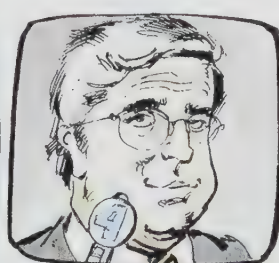
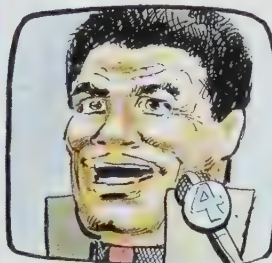


RIGHT NOW I'M THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD WHO CAN GET YOU TO A HOSPITAL IN TIME.



BATMAN? YEAH, I THINK HE'S A-OKAY. HE'S KICKING JUST THE RIGHT BUTTS-- BUTTS THE COPS AIN'T KICKING, THAT'S FOR SURE. HOPE HE GOES AFTER THE HOMOS NEXT.

MAKES ME SICK. WE MUST TREAT THE SOCIALLY MIS-ORIENTED WITH REHABILITATIVE METHODS. WE MUST PATIENTLY REALISE THEIR-- EXCUSE ME--? NO, I'D NEVER LIVE IN THE CITY...



... CAN'T BELIEVE YOU HAD IT PUT BACK, COMMISSIONER. IF GALLAGHER KNEW...

GALLAGHER DOESN'T RUN THIS DEPARTMENT YET, MERKEL!

KOFF



BUT ISN'T THERE SOME OTHER WAY TO CALL HIM?

AT LEAST A DOZEN.



THEN WHY?

TO LET THEM KNOW, MERKEL, TO LET EVERYONE KNOW.



HIT IT.



OBVIOUSLY A FASCIST. NEVER HEARD OF CIVIL RIGHTS.

AND DOESN'T THE TV JUST LOVE HIM.



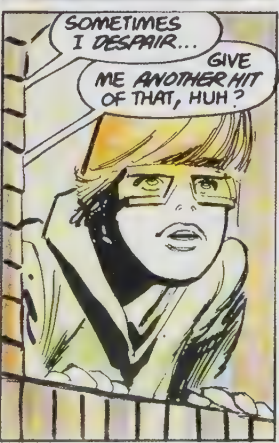
THEY ALL LOVE HIM. THE AMERICAN CONSCIENCE DIED WITH THE KENNEDYS.

TOO TRUE...



ALL THE MARCHING WE DID-- IT'S LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED, NOW.

I KNOW... I KNOW...



SOMETIMES I DESPAIR...

GIVE ME ANOTHER HIT OF THAT, HUH?



--SO IT'S JUST A MATTER OF FIGURING OUT WHAT HE'S AFTER.

THE PAYROLL ROBBERY WAS COMMITTED TO SPONSOR IT.

SPONSOR IT? THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.

TWO HELICOPTERS WERE STOLEN TODAY. ONE, A STATE-OF-THE-ART MILITARY FIGHTER--THE OTHER, AN OLD ARMY SURPLUS JOB. THAT'S GOT TO BE DENT'S WORK.

WITH THAT PAYROLL HE COULD HAVE BOUGHT THEM.

THEN IT'S GOING TO BE A CRIME BY AIR--USING SOMETHING ELSE MORE COSTLY.

HE'S NOT CAREFUL, WHOEVER HE IS.

YOU STILL DON'T THINK IT'S DENT?

I HOPE NOT. HARVEY WRESTLED LONG AND HARD WITH HIS OTHER SIDE. TO HAVE IT DEVOUR HIM NOW...

BUT IF IT IS...

"TWICE AS BIG AS YOU CAN IMAGINE"--THAT'S ALL HE HAD TO SAY?

THAT'S ALL HE KNEW, JIM.

BUT TOMORROW IS THE SECOND--AND A TUESDAY--

IF IT'S HARVEY, WE'LL CATCH HIM...THE TRICK WILL BE TO KEEP HIM ALIVE. HE'S POSSESSED, JIM. OUT OF CONTROL.

I THINK HE WANTS TO DIE.

WE ARE TALKING ABOUT HARVEY DENT...

IT SHOULDN'T BE DIFFICULT TO FIND HIS TARGET. ACCESSIBLE BY HELICOPTER AND TWICE AS BIG AS...

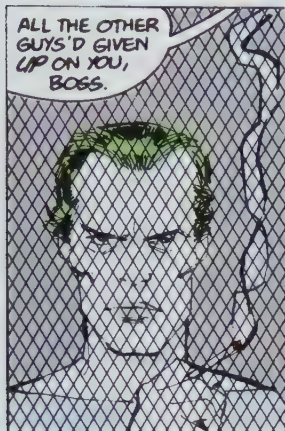
...TWICE AS BIG...

YES, MERV. I AM CONVINCED OF HARVEY'S INNOCENCE. ABSOLUTELY. HOWEVER, I WON'T GO SO FAR AS TO SAY I'M SURE HE HASN'T RETURNED TO CRIME.

I KNOW THAT SOUNDS CONFUSING. THESE THINGS OFTEN DO TO THE LAYMAN. BUT I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN WITHOUT GETTING OVERLY TECHNICAL. YOU SEE, IT ALL GETS DOWN TO THIS BATMAN FELLOW.

BATMAN'S PSYCHOTIC SUBLIMATIVE / PSYCHO-EROTIC BEHAVIOR PATTERN IS LIKE A NET. WEAK-EGGED NEUROTICS, LIKE HARVEY, ARE DRAWN INTO CORRESPONDING INTERSTICING PATTERNS.

YOU MIGHT SAY BATMAN COMMITS THE CRIMES... USING HIS SO-CALLED VILLAINS AS NARCISSISTIC PROXIES...



ALL THE OTHER GUYS'D GIVEN UP ON YOU, BOGS.



BUT I KNEW YOU WAS GONNA BE OKAY. YOU LOOK GOOD...



BET YOU GOT SOME KINDA KEEN ESCAPE PLANNED. WELL, YOU CAN COUNT ON ME. BUT...



...BUT I GOT A PROBLEM.

YOU KNOW I LIKE TO MAKE STUFF. IT'S ALL I'M GOOD AT...



...WELL HARVEY DENT WANTS TO PAY ME A LOT OF MONEY TO MAKE HIM SOME BOMBS.

HE NEEDS THEM TONIGHT-- THAT'S IF I'M GOING TO MAKE THEM...



I HAVEN'T SAID YES YET...



WHAT KIND OF BOMBS?

NERVE
GAS AMPULES.
FREEZING
COMPOUND.
CABLE.
GRAPPLING
HOOKS.
STETHOSCOPE.
PAIN
KILLERS.

NONE OF IT'S
GONE ANYWHERE
IN THE LAST
TEN MINUTES.

I SHIFT MY LEGS
TO KEEP THEM
FROM CRAMPING
AND WATCH
NIGHT SETTLE
LIKE A CEASE
FIRE ON THE
CITY OF GOTHAM.

THEN I
HEAR IT.

DENT--OR WHOEVER
--IS SURE TO BE IN
THE NEWER CAPT.
I'M HOPING HE'LL
LAND ON THE
TOWER I PICKED...

BUT I'M NOT
COUNTING ON IT.

POKITAPOKITAPOKITAPOKITAPO

THE NEW ONE
COMES IN LOW,
A GLEAMING
METAL
DRAGONFLY.

I'LL HAVE
TO BUY
ONE OF
THOSE...

...BROADCAST LIVE
FROM GOTHAM'S TWIN
TOWERS, IT'S
NEWS TWO...

THEY SPLIT.
THE ARMY
SURPLUS JOB
SETTLES DOWN,
SPUTTERING
LIKE A
CRANKY OLD
MAN BEHIND
ME.

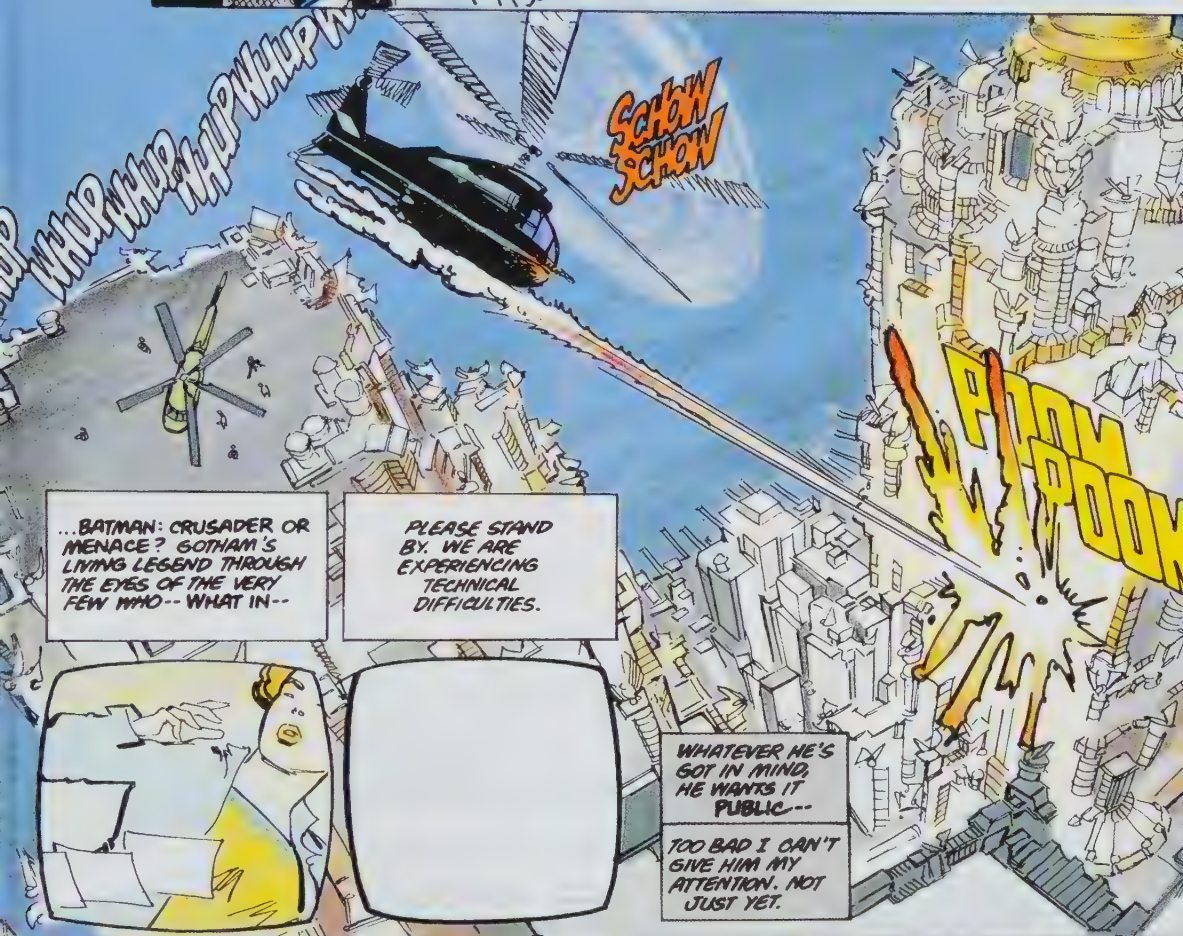
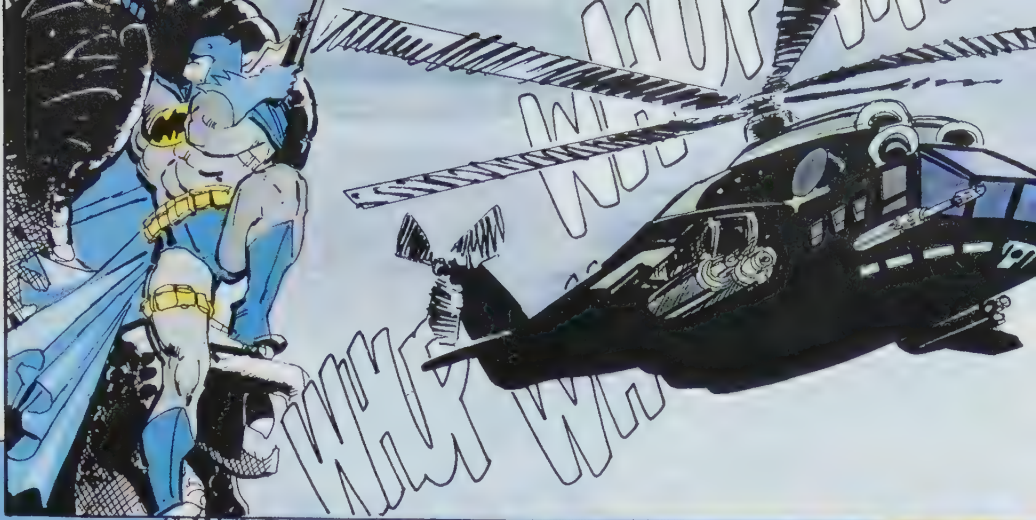
I PICKED
THE WRONG
ROOF.

GOOD
THING I
BROUGHT
THE GUN.

NEWS 2

GOOD EVENING.
I'M LOLA CHONG.
TONIGHT WE'RE
PLEASED TO BRING
YOU A
SPECIAL REPORT...

PAIN THAT'S
THREE DAYS
OLD GRINDS
ACROSS MY
BACK. I
KICK THE
DUST FROM
MY JOINTS
AND CLIMB
IT USED
TO BE
EASIER.



...BATMAN: CRUSADER OR
MENACE? GOTHAM'S
LIVING LEGEND THROUGH
THE EYES OF THE VERY
FEW WHO-- WHAT IN--

PLEASE STAND
BY. WE ARE
EXPERIENCING
TECHNICAL
DIFFICULTIES.

WHATEVER HE'S
GOT IN MIND,
HE WANTS IT
PUBLIC--

TOO BAD I CAN'T
GIVE HIM MY
ATTENTION. NOT
JUST YET.

THIS STUFF
HAS A NAME
THAT'S AS
LONG AS
YOUR ARM.

IT WAS
DEVELOPED
BY THE
MILITARY
DURING ONE
OF OUR MORE
CONTEMPTIBLE
WARS.

HEY--

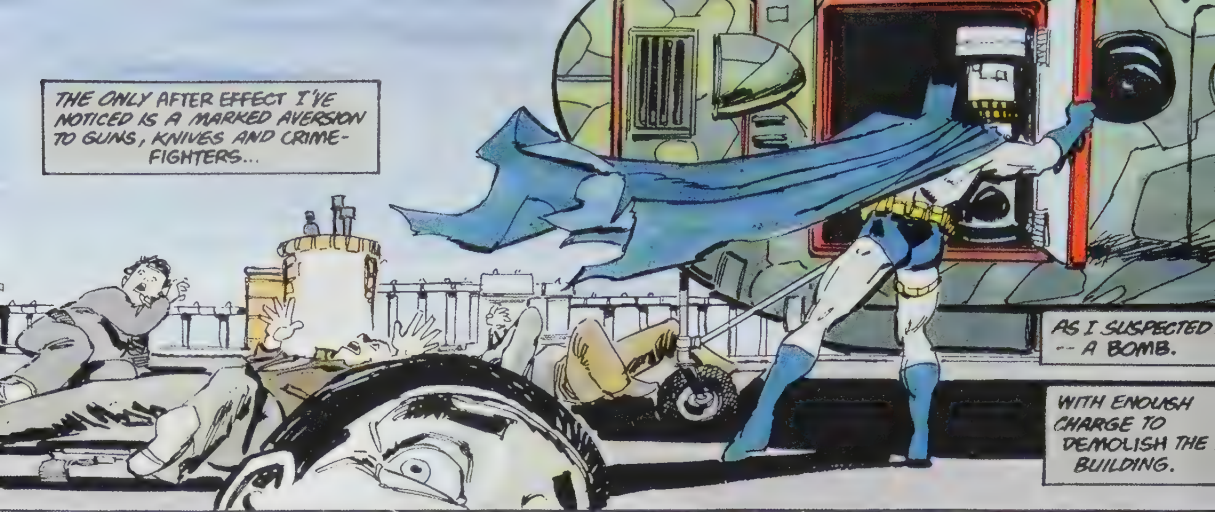
IT CONCENTRATES A POWERFUL
STIMULANT TO A SECTION OF
THE RIGHT HEMISPHERE OF
YOUR BRAIN.

A STRONG
DOSE AND
YOU DIE OF
FRIGHT IN
FIFTEEN
SECONDS.

A LIGHT
DOSE, LIKE
THIS--

--AND YOU SPEND
TWENTY OR THIRTY MINUTES
RELIVING YOUR LEAST
FAVORITE NIGHTMARE.

THE ONLY AFTER EFFECT I'VE NOTICED IS A MARKED AVERSION TO GUNS, KNIVES AND CRIME-FIGHTERS...

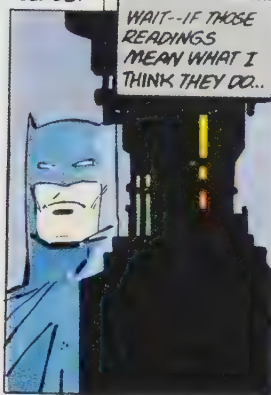


AS I SUSPECTED -- A BOMB.

WITH ENOUGH CHARGE TO DEMOLISH THE BUILDING.

APPARENTLY A DETONATOR JOB. THAT WOULD MAKE SENSE.

WAIT--IF THOSE READINGS MEAN WHAT I THINK THEY DO...



AM I ON?

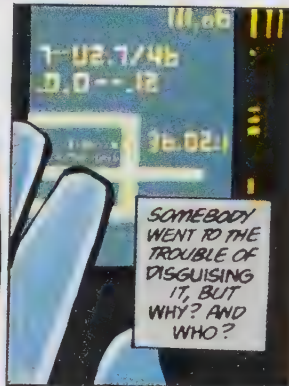
THE IGNITION PROCESS HAS ALREADY STARTED. IT COULD BLOW ANY SECOND.

PEOPLE OF GOTHAM-- LET ME APOLOGIZE RIGHT OFF THE BAT FOR THE INTERRUPTION OF YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE. THIS IS HARVEY DENT SPEAKING.

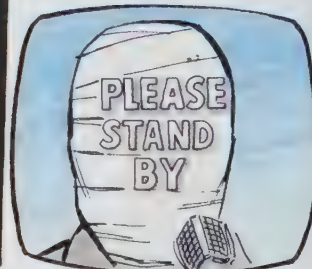
PLEASE STAND BY



SOMEBODY WENT TO THE TROUBLE OF DISGUIISING IT, BUT WHY? AND WHO?



PLEASE STAND BY



BRILLIANT DESIGN--WORTHY OF THE JOKER.

I'M NOT UP ON THESE DIGITAL JOBS...



I STAND HERE ATOP GOTHAM'S BEAUTIFUL TWIN TOWERS, WITH TWO BOMBS CAPABLE OF MAKING THEM RUBBLE. YOU HAVE TWENTY MINUTES TO SAVE THEM.

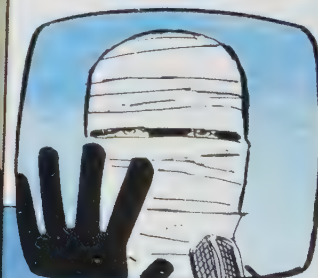


SO I FREEZE IT. AND IF I HAD THE TIME OR THE RIGHT--

-- I'D SAY A PRAYER.



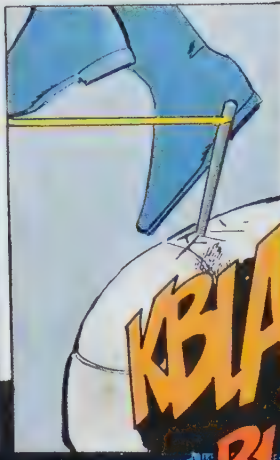
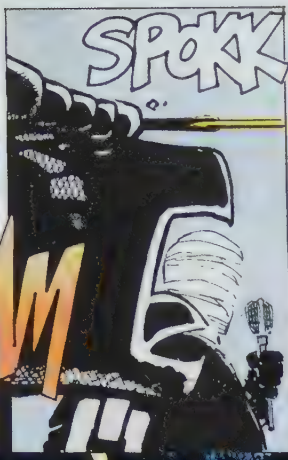
THE PRICE IS FIVE MILLION DOLLARS. I WOULD HAVE MADE IT TWO-- BUT I'VE GOT BILLS TO PAY...



TEN SECONDS LATER BOTH THE BUILDING AND I ARE STANDING AND EXACTLY THAT MUCH IS RIGHT IN THE WORLD. I TAKE IN THE ACTION ON THE OTHER SIDE

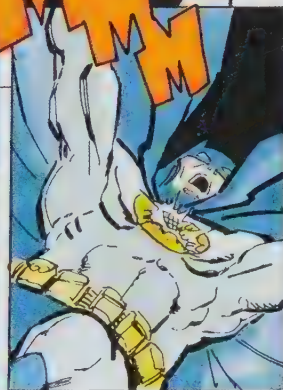
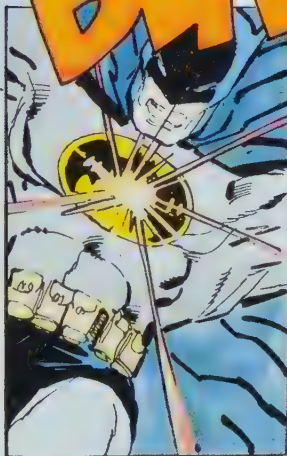


HE'S TAPPED INTO THE TV ANTENNA-- NO DOUBT RANSOMING THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS-- WHILE THE TIMER HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT IS MOMENTS AWAY FROM TAKING IT ALL OUT OF HIS HANDS. HARVEY, IF IT IS YOU-- YOU'VE HAD EVERY CHANCE THERE IS.



IN TEN YEARS
I'VE NEVER
FELT SO CALM.
SO RIGHT.

THIS WOULD
BE A FINE
DEATH...



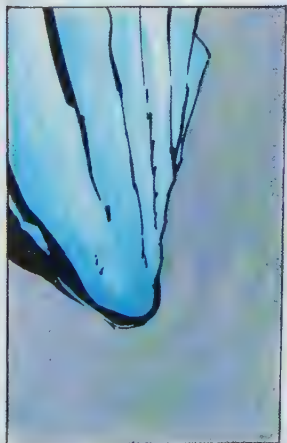
--MAGNUM LOAD HAS TO BE--
HITS ME LIKE A FREIGHT
TRAIN--THE PLATE HOLDS--



-- WHY DO YOU THINK I WEAR
A TARGET ON MY CHEST --
CAN'T ARMOR MY HEAD --
LEFT ARM NUMB --



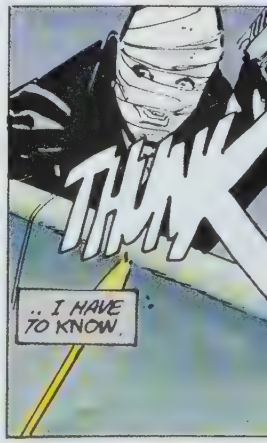
-- IF IT'S A HEART ATTACK
I'M FINISHED --



... A FINE DEATH.
BUT THERE ARE
THE THOUSANDS
TO THINK OF...



... AND HARVEY...



THINK

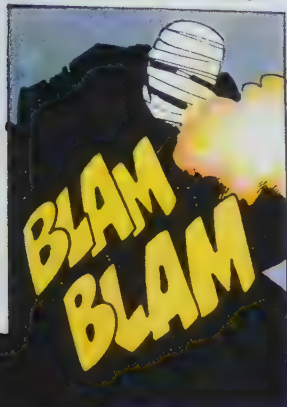
... I HAVE
TO KNOW.



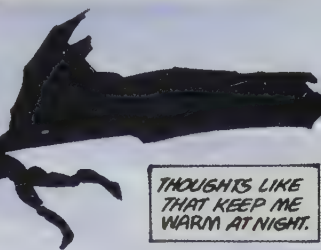
HE'S GOT YOUR STYLE,
HARVEY, AND YOUR GUTS.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM,
HE'S GOT NO MORE SENSE
OF SELF-PRESERVATION
THAN YOU DID...

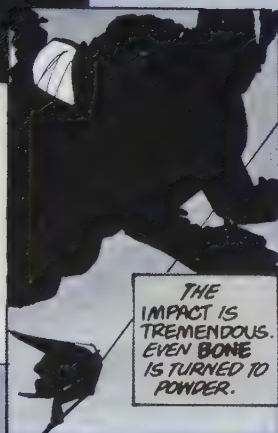
... AND INSPIRES THE
SAME LEVEL OF LOYALTY
FROM HIS MEN.



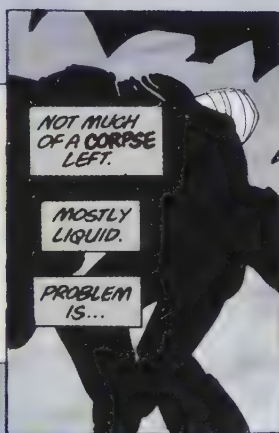
IT TAKES NEARLY A MINUTE TO FALL FROM THIS HEIGHT. AND DESPITE
WHAT YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, YOU'RE LIKELY TO STAY CONSCIOUS
ALL THE WAY DOWN.



THOUGHTS LIKE
THAT KEEP ME
WARM AT NIGHT.



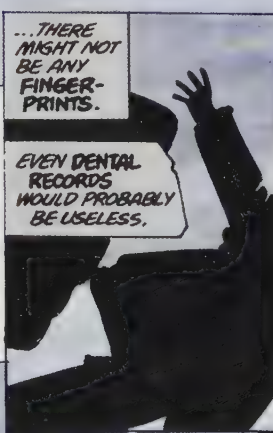
THE
IMPACT IS
TREMENDOUS.
EVEN BONE
IS TURNED TO
POWDER.



NOT MUCH
OF A CORPSE
LEFT.

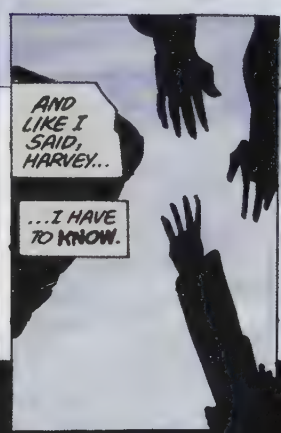
MOSTLY
LIQUID.

PROBLEM
IS...



...THERE
MIGHT NOT
BE ANY
FINGER-
PRINTS.

EVEN DENTAL
RECORDS
WOULD PROBABLY
BE USELESS.



AND
LIKE I
SAID,
HARVEY...

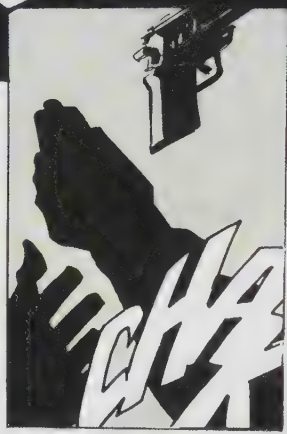
...I HAVE
TO KNOW.



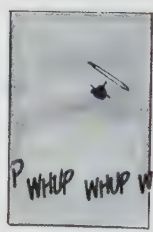
WE TUMBLE
LIKE LOVERS.



THE AIR
IS COLD.



THE NIGHT
IS SILENT.



LEAVING THE
WORLD NO
POORER--

--FOUR MEN
DIE.

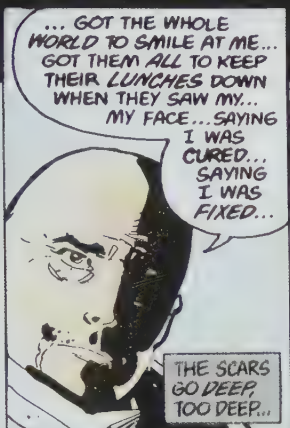


...HARVEY...

...WHAT ARE YOU SO MAD ABOUT, BATS? I'VE... BEEN A SPORT...

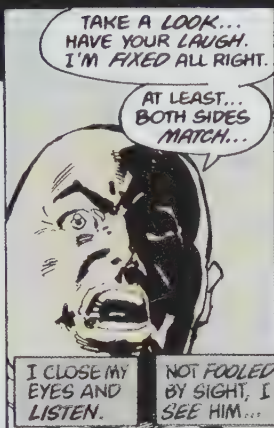
YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THAT-- I PLAYED ALONG.

AND YOU... YOU TOOK YOUR JOKE ABOUT AS FAR AS IT COULD GO...



... GOT THE WHOLE WORLD TO SMILE AT ME... GOT THEM ALL TO KEEP THEIR LUNCHES DOWN WHEN THEY SAW MY... MY FACE... SAYING I WAS CURED... SAYING I WAS FIXED...

THE SCARS GO DEEP, TOO DEEP...



TAKE A LOOK... HAVE YOUR LAUGH. I'M FIXED ALL RIGHT.

AT LEAST... BOTH SIDES MATCH...

I CLOSE MY EYES AND LISTEN.

NOT FOOLED BY SIGHT, I SEE HIM...



HAVE YOUR LAUGH, BATMAN-- TAKE A LOOK!

...AS HE IS.



...TAKE A LOOK...



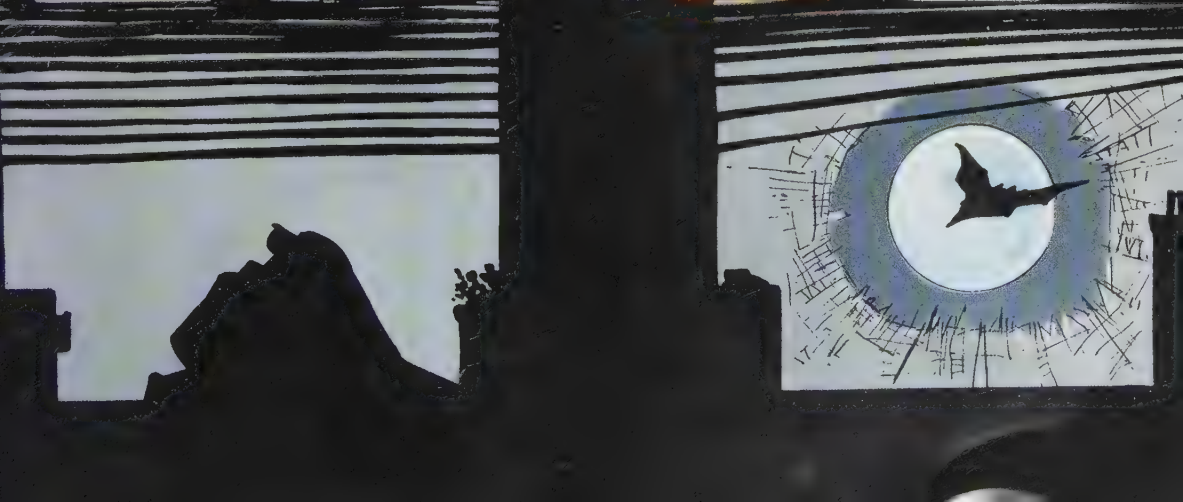
I SEE HIM. I SEE...



... I SEE... A REFLECTION, HARVEY.



A REFLECTION.





BOOK TWO:
THE DARK KNIGHT TRIUMPHANT



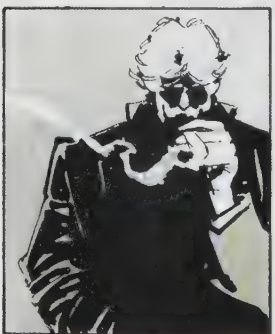
PROBLEM WITH CRIME IS THE MORE YOU KNOW, THE MORE NERVOUS IT MAKES YOU.



I PASS A LIQUOR STORE, RUN MY EYES OVER THE RIGID FEATURES OF THE HUNK OF METAL THAT USED TO BE A FRIENDLY MERCHANT.



I CURSE SARAH, NOT MEANING IT, FOR HER HIPPIE VEGETARIAN RECIPES AND THE BEAN SPROUTS SHE FORGOT TO PICK UP.



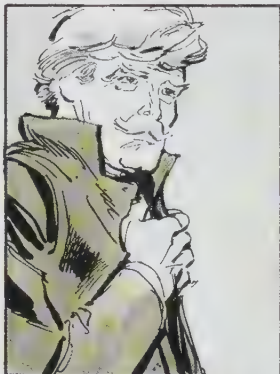
DYING NEVER SEEMED REAL TO ME WHEN I WAS YOUNG...



ME, I CAN'T LOOK AT THAT DOORWAY OVER THERE WITHOUT THINKING OF THE SEVENTY-TWO CORPSES I'VE FOUND IN SPOTS LIKE THAT...



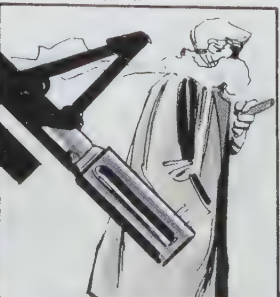
I WONDER HOW MANY MEN HE'S HAD TO KILL, JUST TO STAY IN BUSINESS.



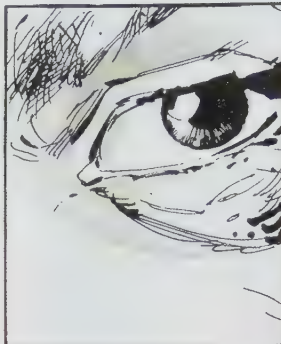
THEN MY CIGAR DOES ITS USUAL AND I COUGH UP A LOAD OF THE BROWN STUFF.



FOR SOME REASON I WANT TO SEE BRUCE -- NOT TO TALK... I MEAN SURE, TO TALK, AND MAYBE TO DRINK, EVEN THOUGH HE SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN THAT UP.



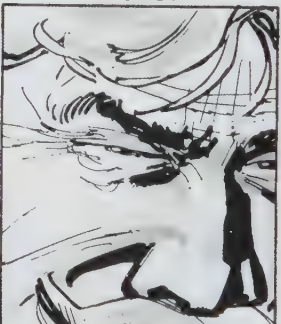
...SHOT OR STABBED OR JUST BEATEN TO DEATH BECAUSE THEY WERE TOO STUPID TO KEEP THEIR DISTANCE.



I SEE A HIGH-PRICED CAR, GLEAMING LIKE NEW IN THE STREETLIGHT, ONCE A SYMBOL OF WEALTH AND POWER, NOW JUST ANOTHER TARGET IN A CITY OF VICTIMS.



I'M AMAZED--AS MY HEAD GOES LIGHT AND THE SPOTS DANCE IN FRONT OF ME-- THAT SHE CONVINCED ME NOT TO SMOKE IN MY OWN HOME.



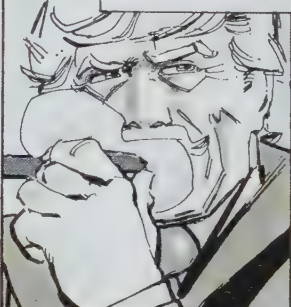
SUDDENLY THE HAIR BRISTLES ON THE BACK OF MY NECK.



TOO STUPID, OR TOO CIVILIZED. ONE'S THE SAME AS THE OTHER IN GOTHAM CITY.



A YOUNG BOY DASHES PAST ME, HEALTHY, DIRTY, AND BEAUTIFUL. YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT HE MAKES ME THINK OF.



THEN I SUCK IT AGAIN.



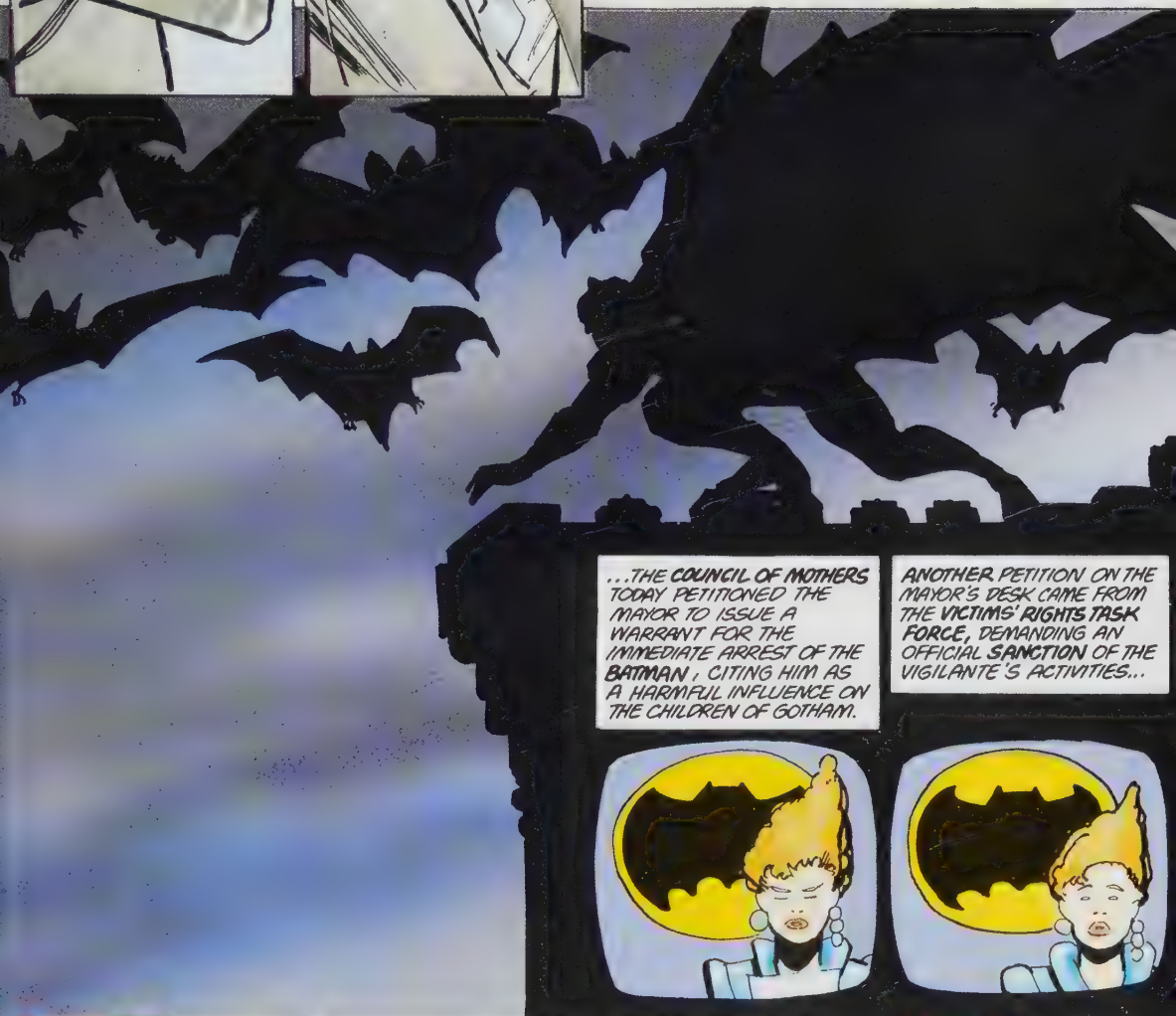
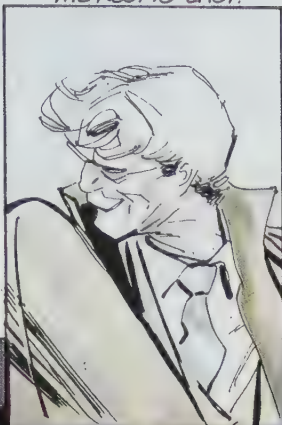
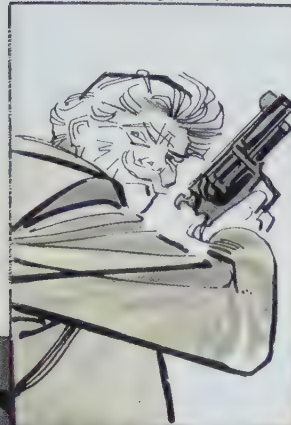
I HEAR A GIRLISH GIGGLE AND THE COLD, OILED SOUND OF A GUN BEING COCKED BEHIND ME.



I SEE THE FACE OF A KILLER WHO ISN'T YET OLD ENOUGH TO SHAVE.

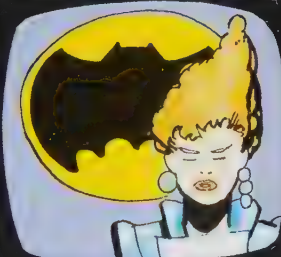
I THINK OF SARAH.

THE REST IS EASY.



...THE COUNCIL OF MOTHERS
TODAY PETITIONED THE
MAYOR TO ISSUE A
WARRANT FOR THE
IMMEDIATE ARREST OF THE
BATMAN, CITING HIM AS
A HARMFUL INFLUENCE ON
THE CHILDREN OF GOTHAM.

ANOTHER PETITION ON THE
MAYOR'S DESK CAME FROM
THE VICTIMS' RIGHTS TASK
FORCE, DEMANDING AN
OFFICIAL SANCTION OF THE
VIGILANTE'S ACTIVITIES...



THE MAYOR
SPOKE TO
REPORTERS
THIS
AFTERNOON
...

STILL IN
CONSULTATION.
IT'S STILL IN
CONSULTATION.



INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE
TO CRIMINALS CONTINUE
TO ABOUND IN GOTHAM.
WE CANNOT BE SURE
WHICH ARE THE WORK OF
THE BATMAN--



-- AND WHICH
HE HAS
INSPIRED.

EXCUSE
ME--

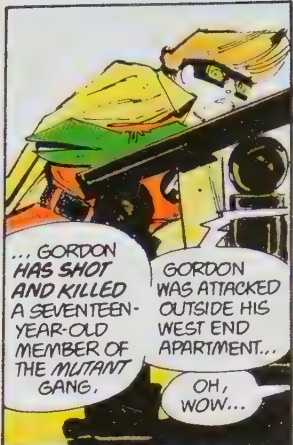


--I'VE JUST BEEN HANDED THIS BULLETIN--

COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON HAS BEEN SHOT AND KILLED--



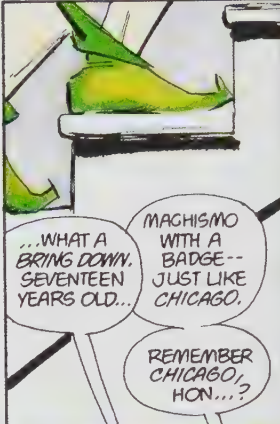
-- OOPS! SORRY, FOLKS. I READ IT WRONG...



... GORDON HAS SHOT AND KILLED A SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD MEMBER OF THE MUTANT GANG.

GORDON WAS ATTACKED OUTSIDE HIS WEST END APARTMENT...

OH, WOW...



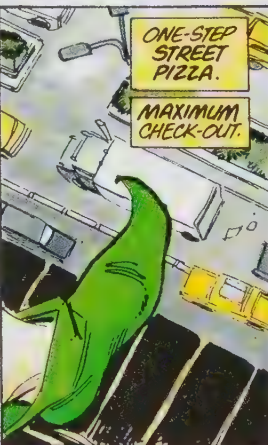
...WHAT A BRING DOWN. SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD...

MACHISMO WITH A BADGE-- JUST LIKE CHICAGO.

REMEMBER CHICAGO, HON...?



NOT REAL WELL. I WAS TRIPPING THE WHOLE TIME...



ONE-STEP STREET PIZZA.

MAXIMUM CHECK-OUT.



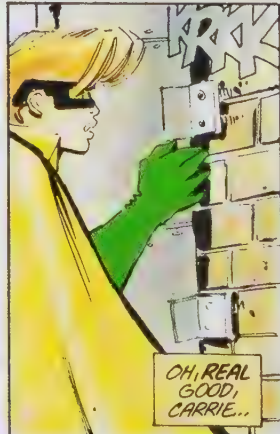
WIND'S ACES. AND THE LEDGE ISN'T TOO MUCH SMALLER THAN A BALANCE BEAM.

SURE. JUST SLIPPERY AND ABOUT A MILE UP.



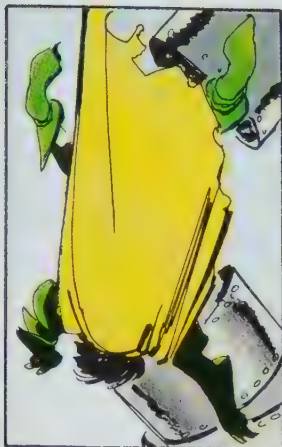
WALL'S KEEPING ME REAL CLEAN-- LIKE UNDER A CAR.

FIGURE I DIDN'T SPEND TWO WEEKS' LUNCH MONEY ON THE SUIT...

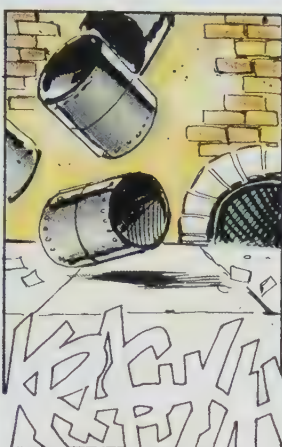


OH, REAL GOOD, CARRIE...





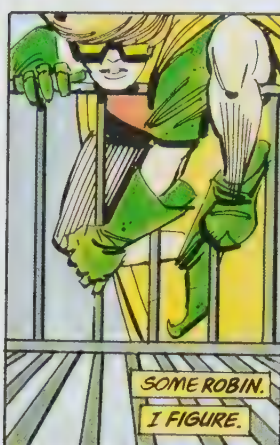
COMMISSIONER--
YOU JUST SHOT A
BOY. HOW DOES
THAT FEEL?
COMMISSIONER?...



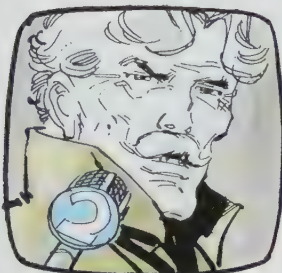
THANK YOU, HERNANDO.
THIS IS THE THIRD
ATTEMPT ON GORDON'S LIFE
IN THE THREE WEEKS SINCE
THE LEADER OF THE
MUTANT ORGANIZATION
MADE HIS VIDEOTAPED
DEATH TREAT...



WE WILL KILL THE OLD
MAN GORDON. HIS WOMEN
WILL WEEP FOR HIM. WE
WILL CHOP HIM. WE WILL
GRIND HIM. WE WILL
BATHE IN HIS BLOOD.



I MYSELF WILL KILL THE
FOOL BATMAN. I WILL
RIP THE MEAT FROM HIS
BONES AND SUCK THEM
DRY. I WILL EAT HIS
HEART AND DRAG HIS
BODY THROUGH THE
STREET.



DON'T CALL US A GANG.
DON'T CALL US CRIMINALS.
WE ARE THE LAW. WE ARE
THE FUTURE. GOTHAM CITY
BELONGS TO THE MUTANTS.
SOON THE WORLD WILL
BE OURS.



GORDON, FACING MANDATORY
RETIREMENT LATER THIS
WEEK, HAS OFFERED TO
STAY AT THE JOB UNTIL THE
MUTANT CRISIS HAS BEEN
RESOLVED. POLICE MEDIA
RELATIONS DIRECTOR LOUIS
GALLAGHER HAD THIS TO SAY...



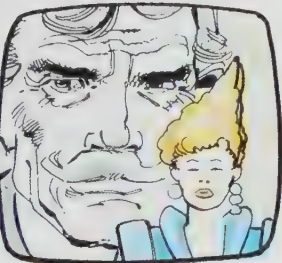
NICE OF JIM TO OFFER, BUT
I THINK WE ALL KNOW
THINGS 'LL COOL OUT ONCE
HE STEPS DOWN. THE
MUTANTS HAVE A THING
ABOUT HIM...NO, I THINK
IT'S TIME FOR NEW BLOOD...



STRANGELY, THAT "NEW BLOOD"
HAS YET TO BE OFFICIALLY
ANNOUNCED. WHILE
INSPECTOR JOHN DALE
SEEMS TO BE THE OBVIOUS
CHOICE, THE MAYOR HAS
YET TO COMMIT HIMSELF...



I'M STILL POOLING
OPINIONS.
I'M STILL POOLING
OPINIONS.



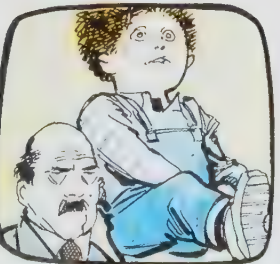
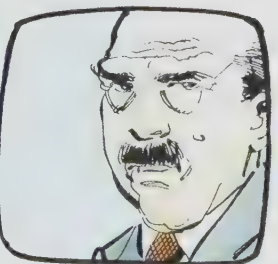
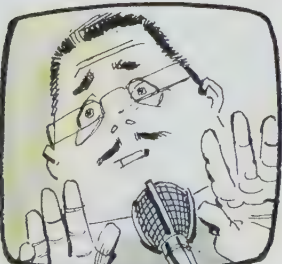
WITH A SCANT SIX HOURS
REMAINING, THE QUESTIONS
HANG IN THE AIR--WHO
WILL REPLACE JIM GORDON?
AND WHAT WILL BECOME
THE OFFICIAL POSITION ON
THE BATMAN? TOM?

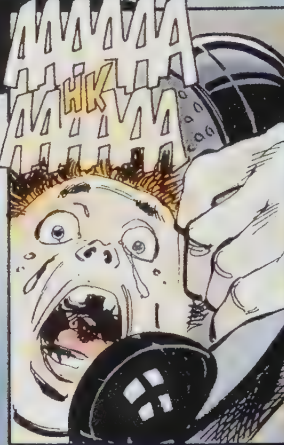
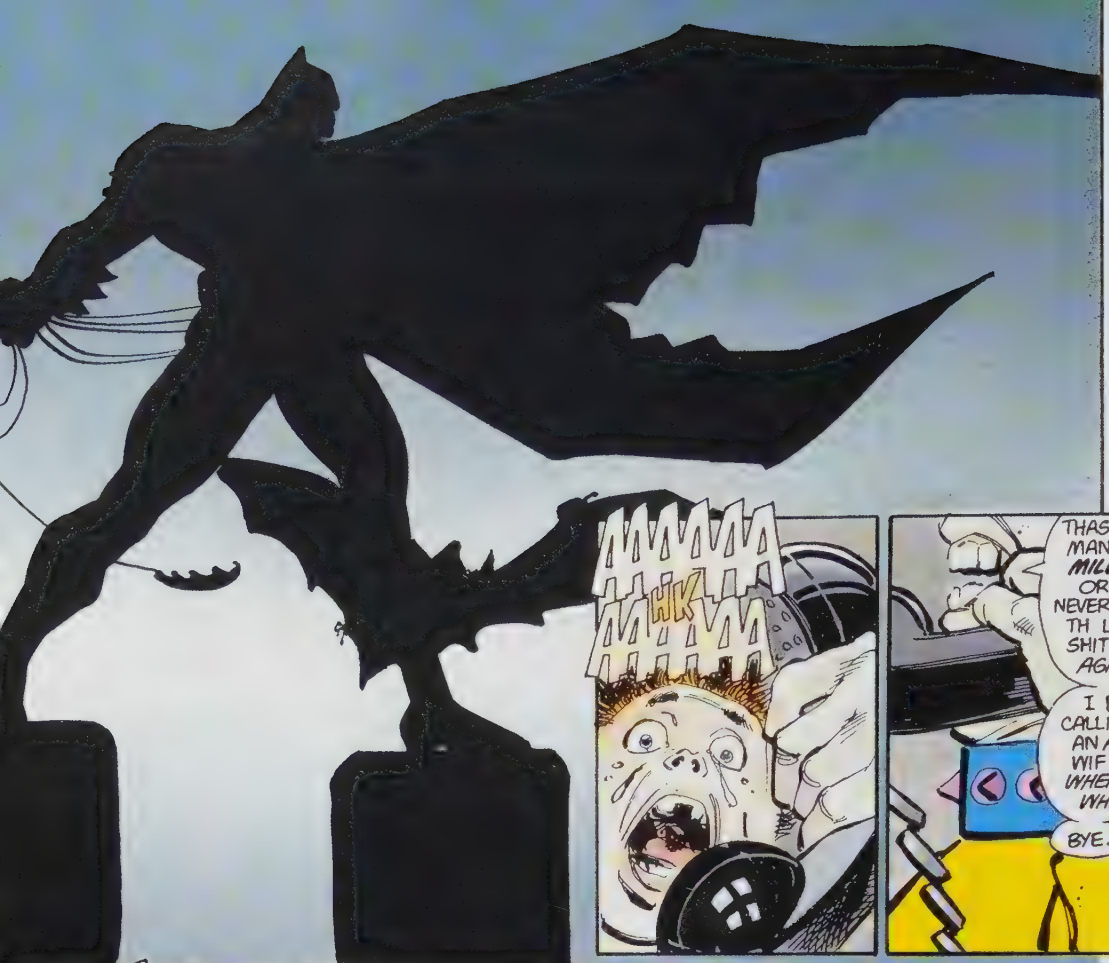


GOOD QUESTION, LOLA.
MRS. JOYCE RIDLEY WAS
ADMITTED TO A PRIVATE
HOSPITAL UPSTATE FOR
PSYCHIATRIC OBSERVATION
FOLLOWING HER COLLAPSE
THIS MORNING.



HER TEN-MONTH BABY,
KEVIN, HEIR TO THE
RIDLEY CHEWING GUM
FORTUNE, IS STILL
MISSING. ANYONE WITH
INFORMATION IS URGED
TO CALL THE CRISIS
HOTLINE...

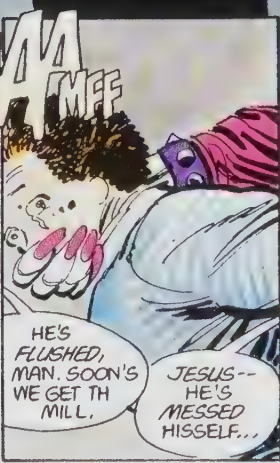




THAS RIGHT, MAN--ONE MILLION--OR YOU NEVER HEAR TH LITTLE SHIT CRY AGAIN.

I BE CALLIN IN AN HOUR WIF TH WHERE AN WHEN.

BYE.



AAAAA MFF

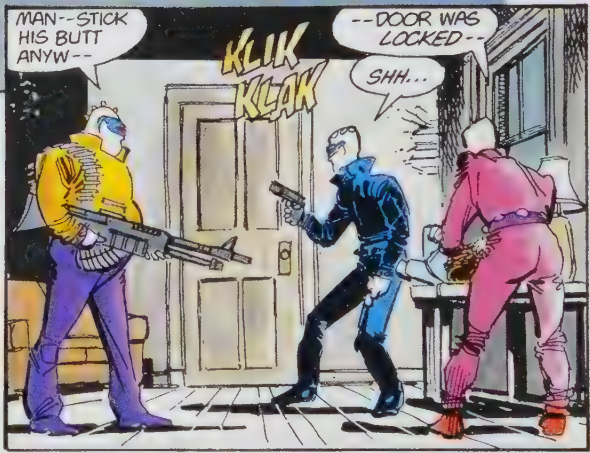
RIDLEY'S GOIN FRIT. BEGGIN TO PAY.

HIT IT WIF THE TRANK, MAN...

LES JUS FLUSH IM DOWN TH JOHN, MAN.

HE'S FLUSHED, MAN. SOON'S WE GET TH MILL.

JESUS-- HE'S MESSED HISSELF...



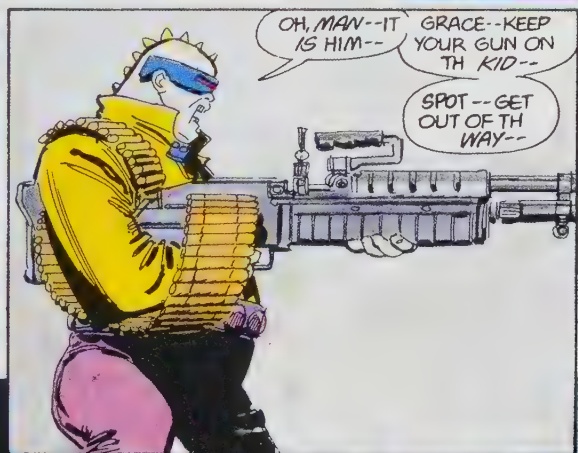
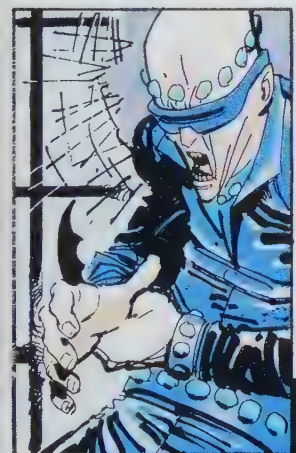
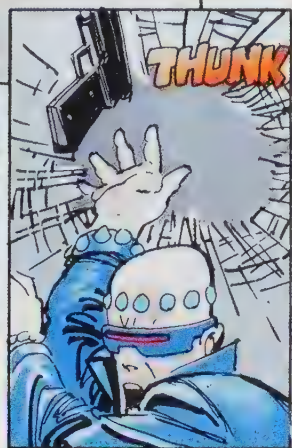
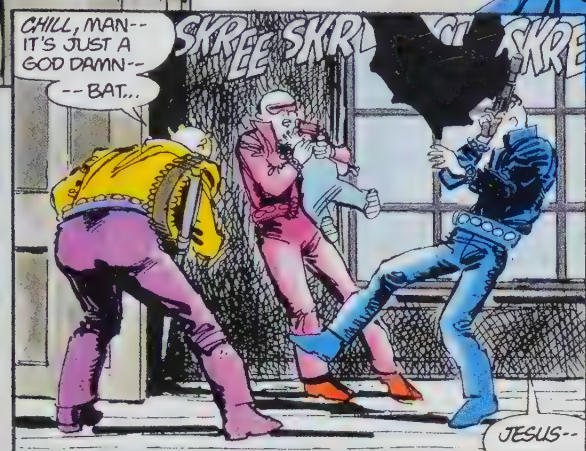
MAN--STICK HIS BUTT ANYW--

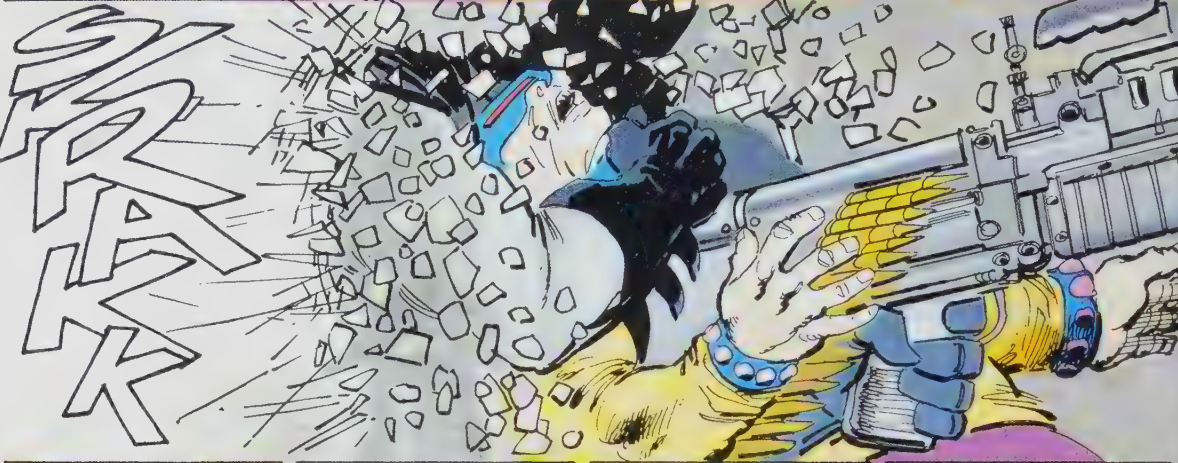
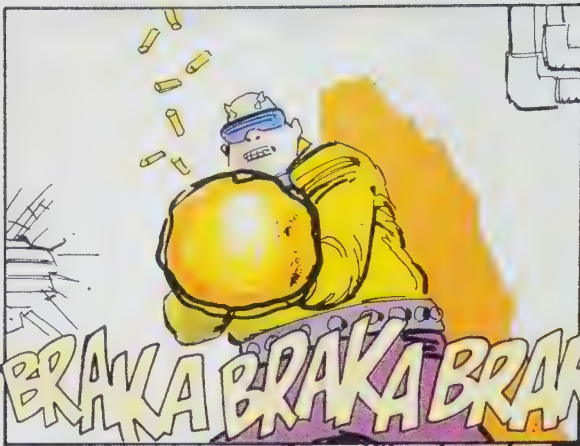
KLIK KLIK

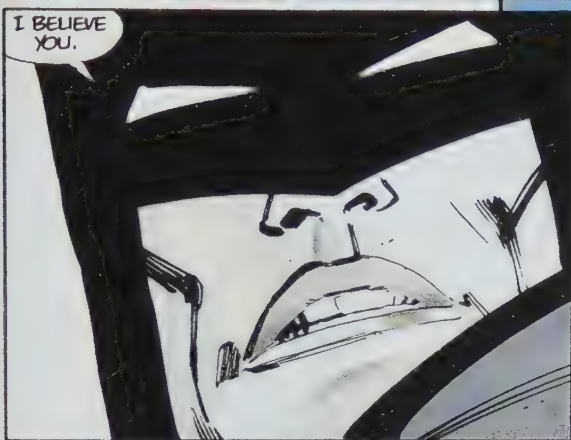
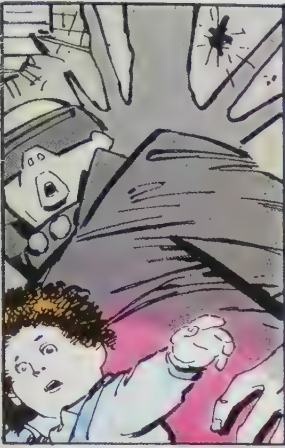
--DOOR WAS LOCKED--

SHH...









I BELIEVE YOU.

... A RUTHLESS, MONSTROUS VIGILANTE, STRIKING AT THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR DEMOCRACY-- MALICIOUSLY OPPOSED TO THE PRINCIPLES THAT MAKE OURS THE MOST NOBLE NATION IN THE WORLD-- AND THE KINDEST...

...FRANKLY, I'M SURPRISED THERE AREN'T A HUNDRED LIKE HIM OUT THERE-- A THOUSAND PEOPLE ARE FED UP WITH TERROR-- WITH STUPID LAWS AND SOCIAL COWARDICE. HE'S ONLY TAKING BACK WHAT'S OURS...

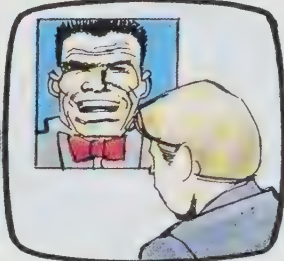
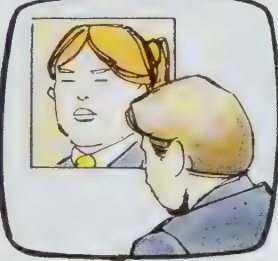


THESE-- AND MANY, MANY OTHERS-- ARE THE REACTIONS TO A PHENOMENON THAT HAS STRUCK A NERVE CENTER IN OUR SOCIETY-- THE RETURN OF THE BATMAN.

TONIGHT, WE WILL EXAMINE HIS IMPACT ON OUR CONSCIOUSNESS. FROM METROPOLIS-- WE HAVE LANA LANG, MANAGING EDITOR OF THE DAILY PLANET...

... JOINING US FROM GOTHAM CITY-- DR. BARTHOLOMEW WOLPER, POPULAR PSYCHOLOGIST AND SOCIAL SCIENTIST, AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING "HEY--I'M OKAY"...

... WITH US TONIGHT FROM HIS OFFICE IN WASHINGTON-- PRESIDENTIAL MEDIA ADVISOR CHUCK BRICK.



DR. WOLPER-- YOU HAVE CLAIMED THAT THE BATMAN IS HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CRIMES HE FIGHTS. STILL, CRIME RATES HAVE SHOWN A STEADY DROP IN THE WEEKS SINCE HIS RETURN. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS?

I'M GLAD YOU ASKED ME THAT QUESTION, TED. IT IS TRUE THAT THIS BATMAN HAS TERRORIZED THE ECONOMICALLY DIS-ADVANTAGED AND SOCIALLY MISALIGNED-- BUT HIS EFFECTS ARE FAR FROM POSITIVE.

PICTURE THE PUBLIC PSYCHE AS A VAST, MOIST MEMBRANE --THROUGH THE MEDIA, BATMAN HAS STRUCK THIS MEMBRANE A VICIOUS BLOW, AND IT HAS RECOILED. HENCE YOUR MISLEADING STATISTICS.

BUT YOU SEE, TED, THE MEMBRANE IS FLEXIBLE-- AND PERMEABLE. HERE THE MORE SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF THE BLOW BECOME CALCULABLE; EVEN PREDICTABLE. TO WIT--



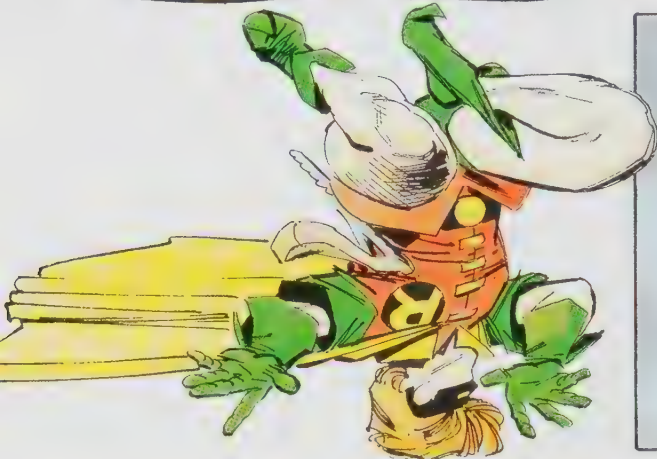
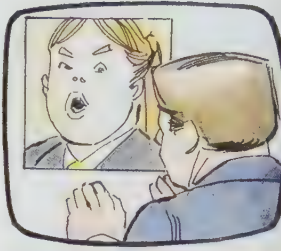
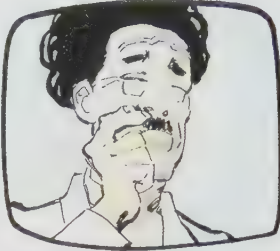
EVERY ANTI-SOCIAL ACT CAN BE TRACED TO IRRESPONSIBLE MEDIA INPUT. GIVEN THIS, THE PRESENCE OF SUCH AN ABERRANT, VIOLENT FORCE IN THE MEDIA CAN ONLY LEAD TO ANTI-SOCIAL PROGRAMMING.

JUST AS HARVY DENT-- WHO'S RECOVERING STEADILY, THANKS FOR ASKING-- ASSUMED THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGICAL DOPPELGÄNGER TO THE BATMAN, SO A WHOLE NEW GENERATION, CONFUSED AND ANGRY--

-- WILL BE BENT TO THE MATRIX OF BATMAN'S PATHOLOGICAL SELF-DELUSION. BATMAN IS, IN THIS CONTEXT-- AND PARDON THE TERM-- A SOCIAL DISEASE...

THAT'S THE DUMBEST LOAD OF...

LANA-- PLEASE-- THE NETWORK--

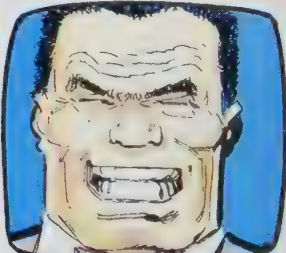
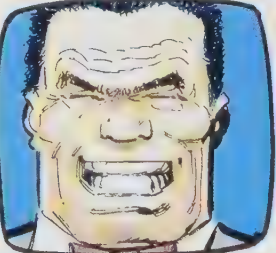
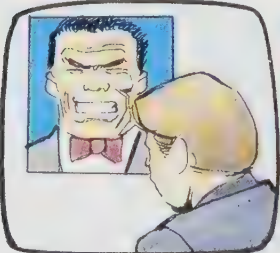


MR BRICK-- THE PRESIDENT HAS REMAINED SILENT ON THIS ISSUE. DON'T YOU-- AND HE-- FEEL THAT THE NATIONAL UPROAR OVER THE BATMAN WARRANTS, IF NOT ACTION, A STATEMENT OF POSITION?

HECK, TED. HE'LL GET AROUND TO A PRESS CONFERENCE SOONER OR LATER. BUT THE PRESIDENT'S GOT TO KEEP HIS EYE ON THE BIG PICTURE, Y'KNOW? AND THIS BATMAN FLAPTRAP, WELL...

...IT'S NOISY, ALL RIGHT. THAT BIG CAPE AND POINTY EARS -- IT'S GREAT SHOW BIZ. AND YOU KNOW THE PRESIDENT KNOWS HIS SHOW BIZ. YOU JUST KEEP YOUR SHORTS ON, TED...

...PRETTY SOON NOW THE RATINGS'LL DROP ON THIS ONE AND IT'LL BLOW OVER. BESIDES, I THINK THE WHOLE THING'S JUST AS LIKELY A HOAX. NETWORKS'VE DONE WORSE.

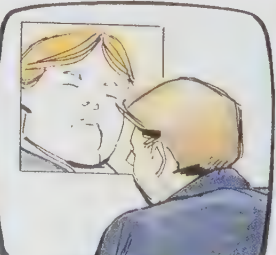
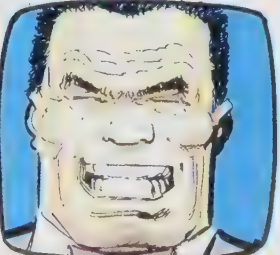


I MEAN, BATBOY'D BE PUSHING SIXTY BY NOW-- IF HE EVER WAS REAL. FUNNY NOBODY'S EVER TAKEN A PICTURE OF HIM... MIGHTY FUNNY, I SAY...

MISS LANG, YOU ARE THE BATMAN'S MOST VOCAL SUPPORTER. HOW CAN YOU CONDONE BEHAVIOR THAT'S SO BLATANTLY ILLEGAL? WHAT ABOUT DUE PROCESS-- CIVIL RIGHTS?

WE LIVE IN THE SHADOW OF CRIME, TED, WITH THE UNSPOKEN UNDERSTANDING THAT WE ARE VICTIMS-- OF FEAR, OF VIOLENCE, OF SOCIAL IMPOTENCE.

A MAN HAS RISEN TO SHOW US THAT THE POWER IS, AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN, IN OUR HANDS. WE ARE UNDER SIEGE -- HE'S SHOWING US THAT WE CAN RESIST.



LANA-- YOU
HAVEN'T EXACTLY
ANSWERED MY
QUESTION...



NEXT UP--
FIGHTING
CRIMES.

DO YOU
KNOW
WHO I
AM,
PUNK?

WH...

I'M THE
WORST
NIGHTMARE
YOU EVER
HAD, KIND
THAT MADE
YOU WAKE UP
SCREAMING
FOR YOUR
MOTHER.

WH...
WHERE
AM I...

YOU'VE
GOT A
MOTHER,
DON'T YOU?
EVERY PUNK
SHOULD
HAVE A
MOTHER...

C...CAN'T
SEE, MAN...

WHAT'S...ON
MY FACE...

QUITE AN
ARSENAL
YOU AND
YOUR BUDDIES
HAD...

THE .45
WAS NOTHING
SPECIAL, OF
COURSE

...I THINK
I'M BLEEDING,
MAN...I NEED
A DOCTOR...

...BUT THAT
SMITH &
WESSON .41
YOUR PAL WAS
CARRYING--

--YOU KNOW
WHICH PAL,
THE ONE YOU
PERFORATED--

-- THAT
PISTOL WAS
ODD.

MAN...

ESPECIALLY SINCE
IT WAS ADAPTED
FOR A SILENCER,
YOU JUST DON'T
RUN ACROSS THAT--
NOT OUTSIDE OF
MILITARY
INTELLIGENCE.

BUT THAT
MGO OF YOURS
-- THAT'S
COMBAT
WEAPONRY,

SAME KIND
ANOTHER MEMBER
OF YOUR GANG
TRIED TO USE ON
JIM GORDON.

SO FILL ME
IN, PUNK--THE
MUTANTS HAVE
A WHOLESALE
DEAL WITH THE
ARMY?

YOU'VE GOT
A LOT OF
TEETH LEFT,
AND I HAVEN'T
EVEN TOUCHED
YOUR TONGUE...

S...SOLID,
MAN...I'LL
TELL YOU...

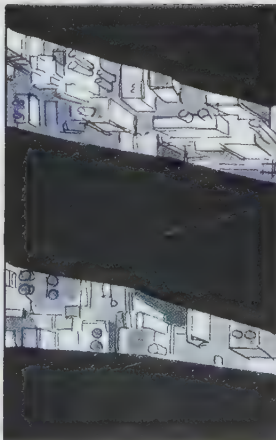
...DEAL
IS...

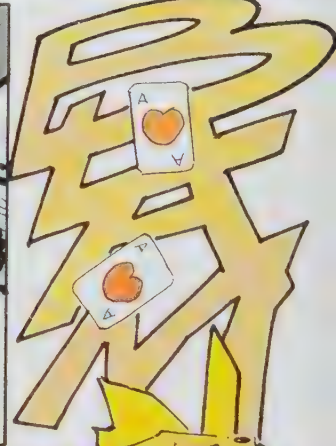
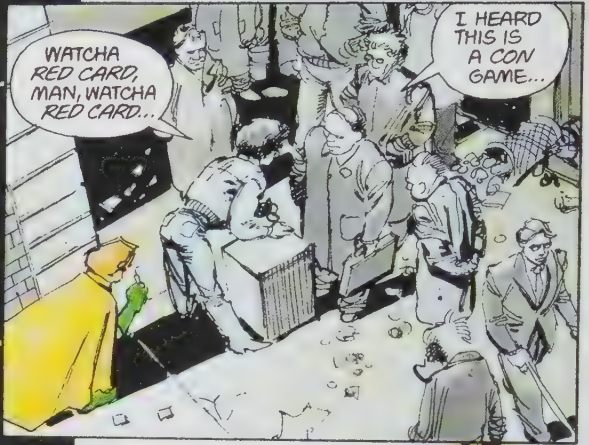
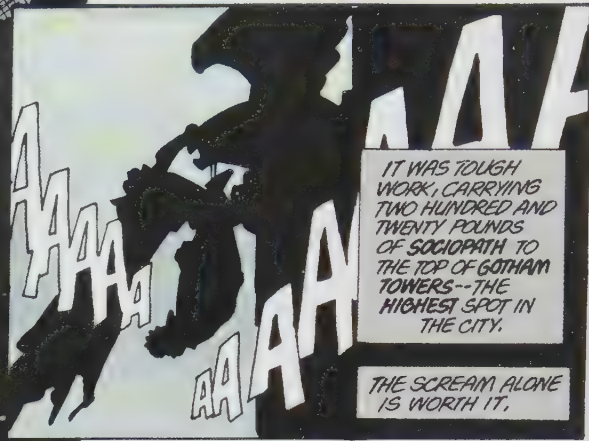
I DON'T THINK
YOU UNDERSTAND
THE SITUATION.
YOU'RE NOT IN
A POSITION TO
NEGOTIATE.

LET ME
SHOW YOU...

...NO COPS,
MAN...I
WALK...

...WHAT
DO YOU SAY,
MAN?





IT'S THE TRAIN, THINKS MARGARET CORCORAN, MY LEGS NEVER HURT LIKE THIS WHEN I WAIT THE TABLES.

THE TRAIN-- IT WON'T LET THE PAIN LIE IN MY CALVES WHERE I'M USED TO IT.



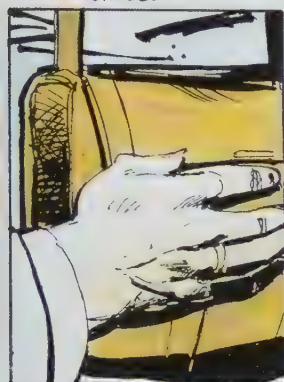
VARICOSE VEINS, THE DOCTOR SAID. EASY FOR HIM TO TELL HER TO QUIT HER JOB. EASY FOR HIM TO TALK ABOUT SURGERY.



SURGERY. WITH NO INSURANCE AND TWO PAYMENTS LEFT ON JAMIE'S BRACES AND THE TURN-OFF NOTICE FROM THE ELECTRIC COMPANY WITH WINTER ON ITS WAY.



SHE FEELS THE METAL SQUARE INSIDE HER PURSE AND SMILES.



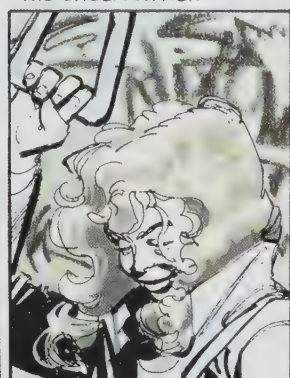
ALMOST NOBODY TIPS ANYMORE. BUT AN UPTOWN DRUNK LEFT TEN DOLLARS ON THE TABLE TONIGHT. WHAT WITH THE TURN-OFF NOTICE IT WAS WRONG TO SPEND THE TIP ON THE PAIN.



BUT YOUNG ROBERT'S ART TEACHER SAYS HE HAS TALENT...



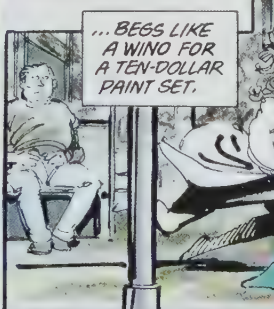
SHE PICTURES ROBERT'S ABLE LITTLE HANDS, HIS EAGER SMILE...



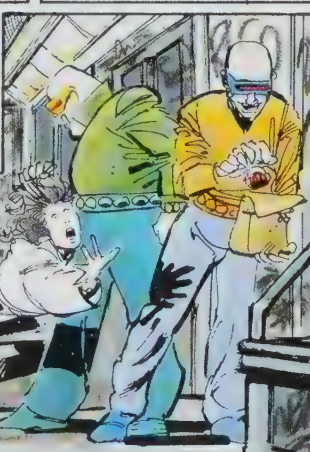
HER PURSE STRAP BITES INTO HER SHOULDER...



...AND MARGARET CORCORAN, WHO HAD NOT PLEADED WITH BLUE CROSS WHEN THEY CANCELLED HER INSURANCE OR WITH CITICORP WHEN THEY REPOSSESSED HER CAR...



...BEGS LIKE A WINO FOR A TEN-DOLLAR PAINT SET.



SHE FEELS HER PURSE HIT HER STOMACH AS THE TRAIN RUMBLES TO A STOP. SHE HEARS THEM LAUGH.



SHE LANDS HARD ON THE CEMENT, BUT IT ONLY HURTS.



SHE FEELS THE SQUARE OF METAL AND THANKS GOD AND CAN'T HELP BUT CRY.



THEN SHE FEELS SOMETHING HEAVY AND ROUND LIKE AN APPLE IN HER PURSE...



WOMAN EXPLODES IN SUBWAY STATION-- FILM AT ELEVEN.





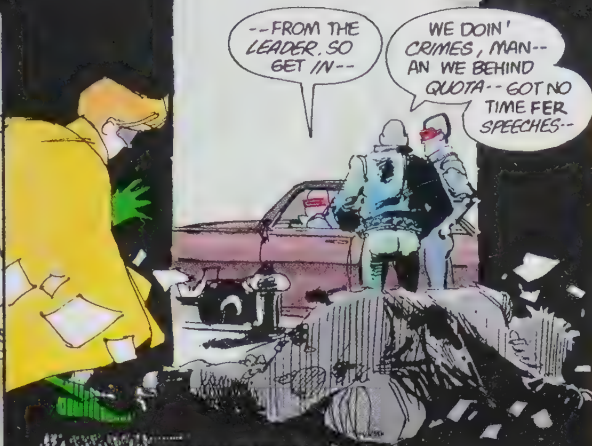
THE GENERAL'S RECORD
IS AN ANTHEM OF
ORDERS BARKED
BETWEEN DEAFENING
EXPLOSIONS... OF A
STEELY, REASSURING
VOICE ABOVE THE
CRIES OF WOUNDED
MEN...

... AN ANTHEM,
SHATTERED INTO
DISCORD IN ITS
LAST FEW NOTES--
BY MISAPPROPRIATED
WEAPONS... SOLD
TO THE MUTANTS.

I ALMOST
ASKED
HIM WHY...

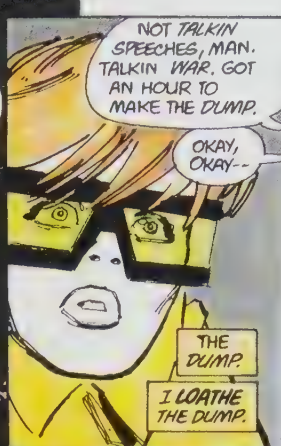


WORD'S
--COME DOWN,
MAN--



--FROM THE
LEADER. SO
GET IN--

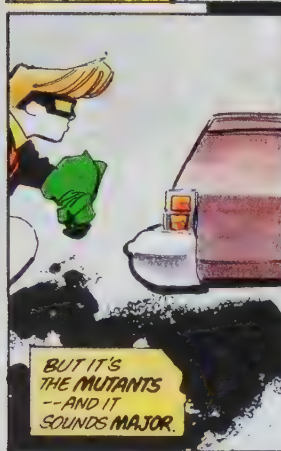
WE DOIN'
CRIMES, MAN--
AN WE BEHIND
QUOTA--GOT NO
TIME FER
SPEECHES--



NOT TALKIN
SPEECHES, MAN--
TALKIN WAR. GOT
AN HOUR TO
MAKE THE DUMP.

OKAY,
OKAY--

THE
DUMP.
I LOATHE
THE DUMP.



BUT IT'S
THE MUTANTS
--AND IT
SOUNDS MAJOR.

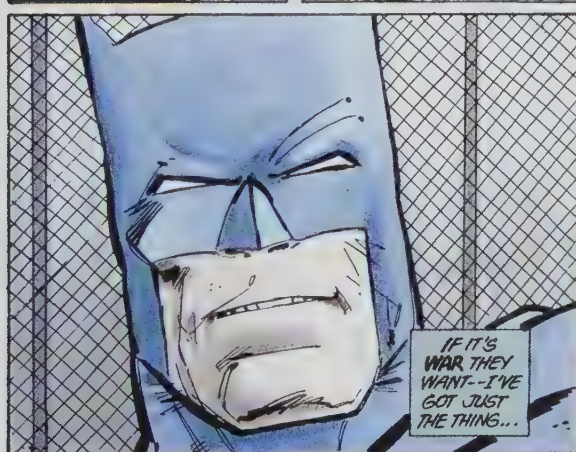


SO HE
MIGHT BE
THERE...



THE GUARD
AT GATE
TWELVE IS
NODDING OFF
WHEN I FIND
THE TRUCKS.
THEY AREN'T
EVEN LOCKED.

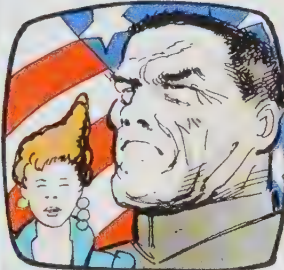
YOU COULD
OVERTHROW
A SMALL
GOVERNMENT
WITH THIS MUCH
FIREPOWER.



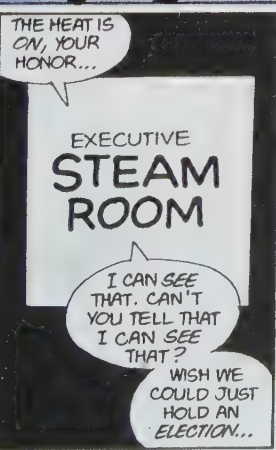
IF IT'S
WAR THEY
WANT--I'VE
GOT JUST
THE THING...

...JOYOUS REUNION OF THE
RIDLEY FAMILY, AND NOW,
A SAD NOTE--FOUR-STAR
GENERAL NATHAN BRIGGS
IS DEAD, AN APPARENT
SUICIDE. RELATIVES SAY
BRIGGS HAD BEEN
VIOLENTLY DEPRESSED...

...SINCE HIS INSURANCE
COMPANY REFUSED TO
SPONSOR A RARE
TREATMENT THAT MAY
HAVE SAVED HIS WIFE,
WHO IS DYING FROM
HODGKIN'S DISEASE IN
OTHER NEWS...



...POLICE MEDIA DIRECTOR
LOUIS GALLAGHER HAS
PROMISED AN ANSWER
SOON TO THE QUESTION THAT'S
ON EVERYONE'S MIND--WHO
WILL BE THE NEW POLICE
COMMISSIONER OF GOTHAM
CITY?...



THE HEAT IS
ON, YOUR
HONOR...

EXECUTIVE
STEAM
ROOM

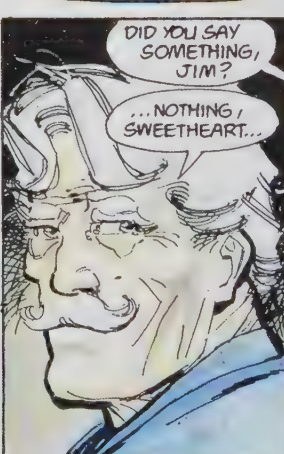
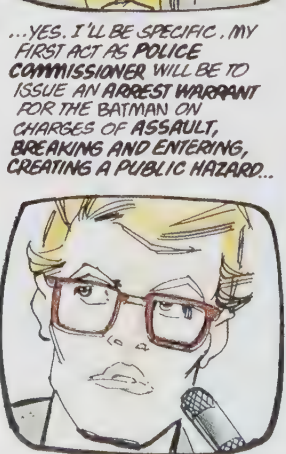
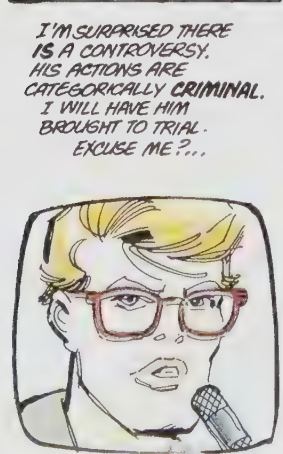
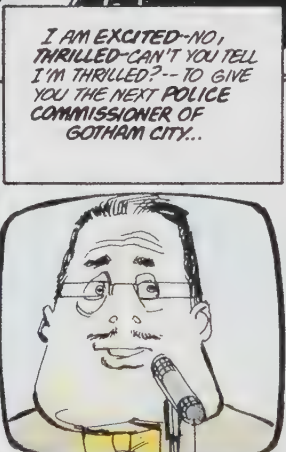
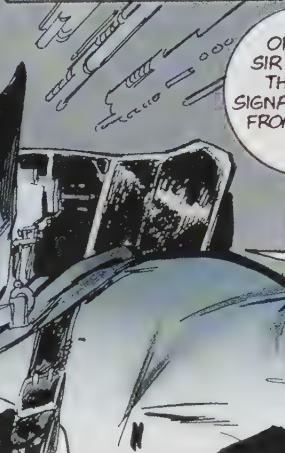
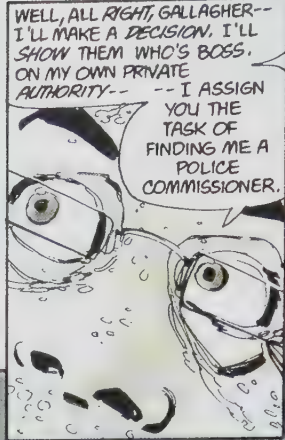
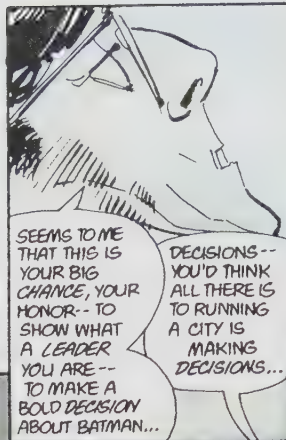
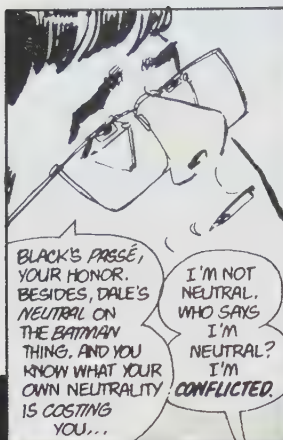
I CAN SEE
THAT. CAN'T
YOU TELL THAT
I CAN SEE
THAT?

WISH WE
COULD JUST
HOLD AN
ELECTION...



NOT FOR COMMISSIONER,
YOUR HONOR. NOT ANY-
MORE. NO, IT'S UP TO
YOU... ...TOUGH DECISION,
TOO. GORDON'S
POPULAR...

I KNOW THAT. DON'T
YOU THINK I KNOW
THAT? AND I'VE GIVEN
IT A LOT OF THOUGHT.
DALE'S LOOKING GOOD TO
ME. HE'S AVAILABLE--
AND HE'S BLACK...



THE DUMP
STRETCHES OUT
OF SIGHT FROM
THE FAR BANK
OF THE WEST
RIVER. I'M
TOLD IT ENDS
SOMEWHERE
BEFORE THE
FARMLANDS.

IT SMELLS OF
ROT AND RUST--
IT'S A BREEDING
GROUND FOR
INSECTS AND
RODENTS.

I CUT THE
ENGINE AND
LISTEN TO ONE
OF THE
RODENTS.



THEY CALL US
A GANG. THEY
CALL US A MOB.
THEY THINK WE
JUST NOISY
KIDS.

ONLY WHEN THEY
DIE BY OUR HANDS
AND SEE THEIR
WOMEN RAPED
WILL THEY KNOW...

--WE HAVE THE STRENGTH--
WE HAVE THE WILL-- AND
NOW WE HAVE THE GUNS.

GOTHAM CITY
BELONGS TO
THE MUTANTS!

TAKE THE
GUNS. TAKE
THE BOMBS.
STORM
POLICE
HEAD-
QUARTERS.

KILL
AND
KILL.

BRING ME
THE HEAD
OF THE OLD
MAN
GORDON.

MY
TRUNCHEON
WILL CARRY
IT THROUGH
THE
STREETS.

I LISTEN FOR
AS LONG AS I
CAN STOMACH
IT...

...THEN I
LET THEM
KNOW I'M
HERE.

I SHALL
CRUSH THE
FOOL--

--BATMA

AAA

B
A
T
M
A

**MUTANTS!
SURRENDER
NOW.. OR BE
DESTROYED!**

THE BATMOBILE -- THAT'S
WHAT YOU CALLED IT, DICK.

KIND OF NAME A
KID WOULD COME
UP WITH...

**BAM BAM BAM
BRAKA BRAKA BRAKA
BIAM**

THEY DON'T
EVEN WAIT
FOR THE
ORDER.

YOUNG PEOPLE
THESE DAYS...

**PWING
PWING
PWING**

...NO RESPECT
FOR HISTORY.

**POOM
POOM**



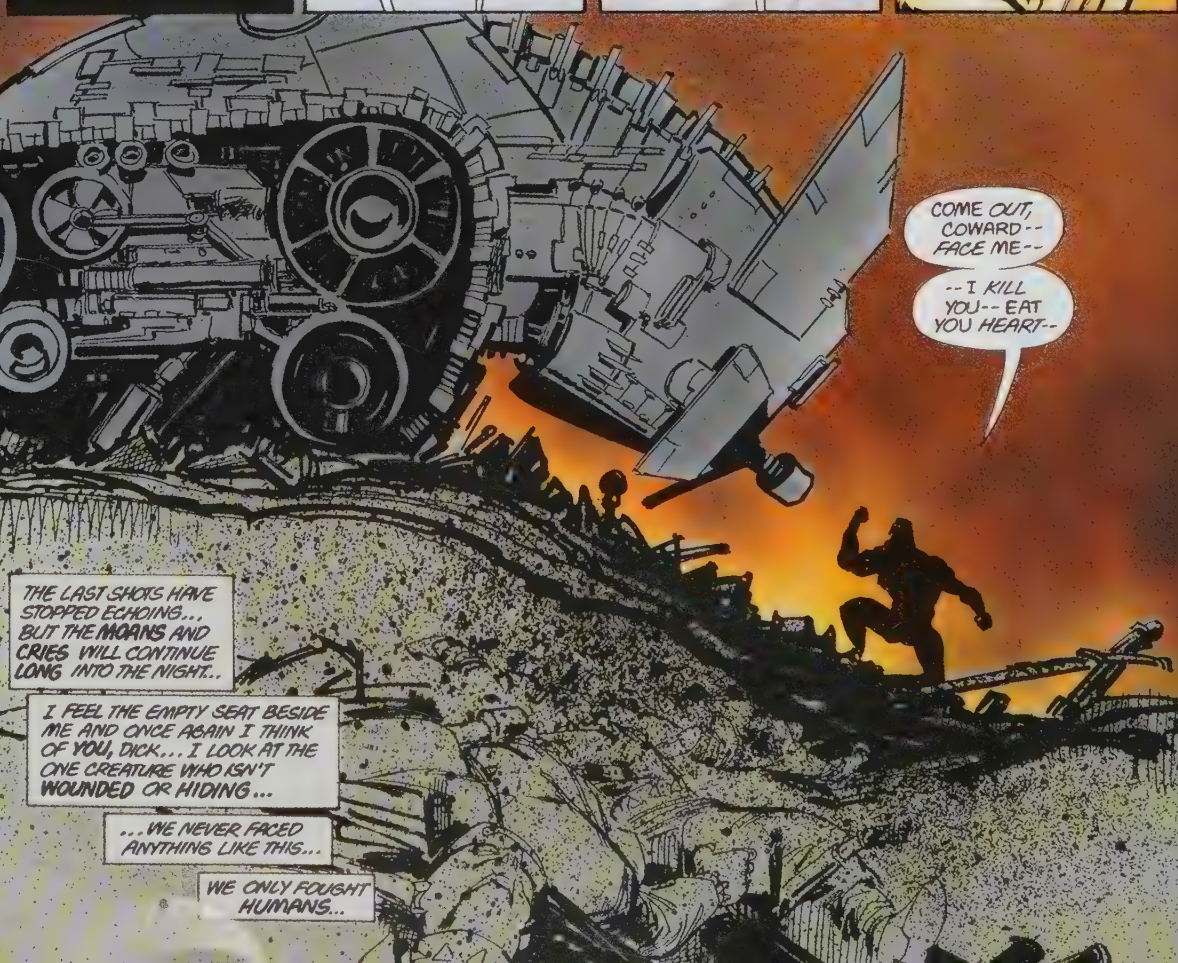
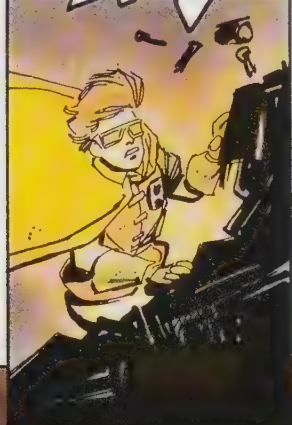
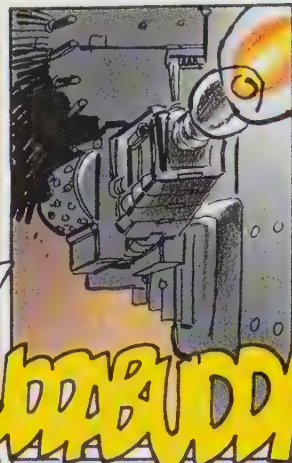
**BAM BAM BAM
BRAKA BRAKA BRAKA**



I MODIFIED HER DURING
SOME NASTY RIFTS
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. THE
ONLY THING I KNOW OF
THAT CAN CUT THROUGH
HER HIDE ISN'T FROM
THIS PLANET

THE MUTANTS USE HAND GRENADES.
THEY USE ROCKET LAUNCHERS.
SOMETHING BOUNCES OFF THE
HULL THAT MUST HAVE COME FROM
A BAZOOKA.

THEY DO EACH OTHER
A LOT OF DAMAGE.



BOOM!

BUDD BUDD BUDD BUDD BUDD

BATMAN!

RUBBER
BULLETS.
HONEST.

GREAT
DINNER,
HON.

THANKS,
BABE.

FTT

HEY...

... DIDN'T
WE HAVE
A KID?...

I CALL
YOU
COWARD!

COME OUT,
COWARD--
FACE ME--

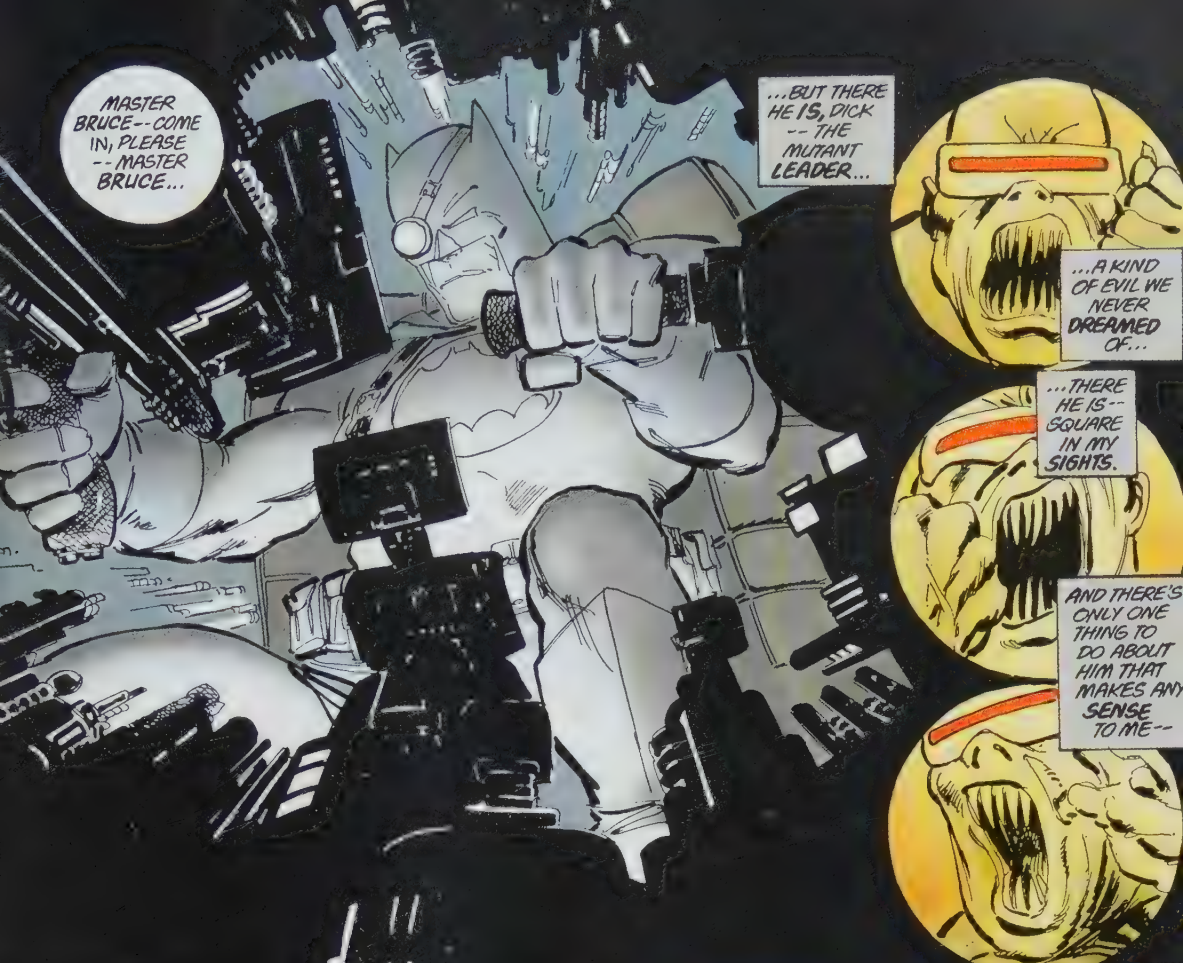
-- I KILL
YOU-- EAT
YOU HEART--

THE LAST SHOTS HAVE
STOPPED ECHOING...
BUT THE MOANS AND
CRIES WILL CONTINUE
LONG INTO THE NIGHT...

I FEEL THE EMPTY SEAT BESIDE
ME AND ONCE AGAIN I THINK
OF YOU, DICK... I LOOK AT THE
ONE CREATURE WHO ISN'T
WOUNDED OR HIDING...

... WE NEVER FACED
ANYTHING LIKE THIS...

WE ONLY FOUGHT
HUMANS...



MASTER
BRUCE-- COME
IN, PLEASE
-- MASTER
BRUCE...

...BUT THERE
HE IS, DICK
-- THE
MUTANT
LEADER...

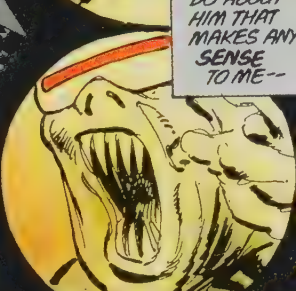


...A KIND
OF EVIL WE
NEVER
DREAMED
OF...

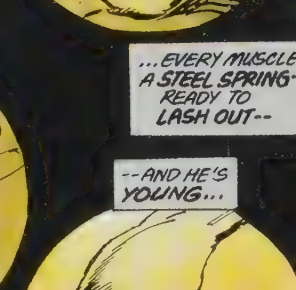


...THERE
HE IS--
SQUARE
IN MY
SIGHTS.

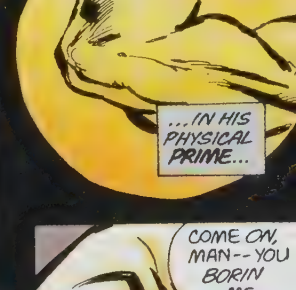
AND THERE'S
ONLY ONE
THING TO
DO ABOUT
HIM THAT
MAKES ANY
SENSE
TO ME--



...EVERY MUSCLE
A STEEL SPRING--
READY TO
LASH OUT--



-- AND HE'S
YOUNG...

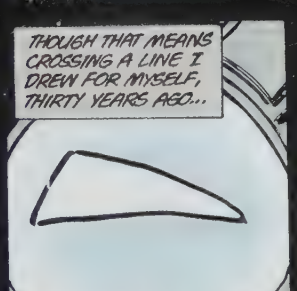


...IN HIS
PHYSICAL
PRIME...

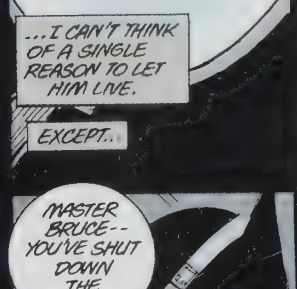


...EXCEPT HE'S GOT
EXACTLY THE KIND
OF BODY I WISH HE
DIDN'T HAVE...

...POWERFUL, WITHOUT
ENOUGH BULK TO SLOW
HIM DOWN...



THOUGH THAT MEANS
CROSSING A LINE I
DREW FOR MYSELF,
THIRTY YEARS AGO...



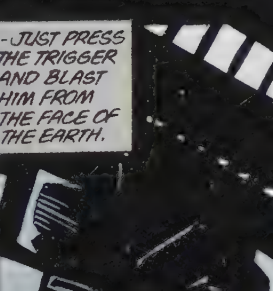
...I CAN'T THINK
OF A SINGLE
REASON TO LET
HIM LIVE.

EXCEPT...



MASTER
BRUCE--
YOU'VE SHUT
DOWN
THE
WEAPONS!

CAN'T HAVE
A BACK
DOOR, ALFRED.
MIGHT BE
TEMPTED TO
USE IT.



...AND I
HONESTLY
DON'T KNOW
IF I COULD
BEAT HIM.



COME ON,
MAN-- YOU
BORIN
ME--



SIR, YOU
CAN'T BE
SERIOUS--

SIR...
HE'LL
KILL
YOU--





AAARR



MFF

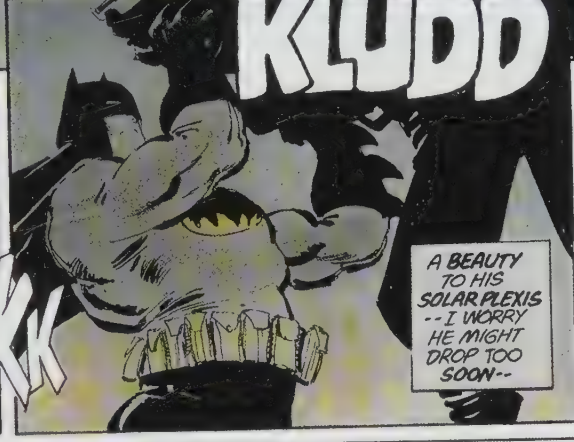
I MAKE HIM EAT SOME GARBAGE--

KRAMP



--THEN I HELP HIM SWALLOW IT.

THWAKK



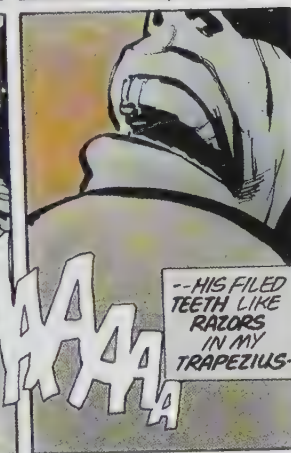
KLUDD

A BEAUTY TO HIS SOLAR PLEXIS -- I WORRY HE MIGHT DROP TOO SOON--



-- THEN HIS CLAWS DIG INTO MY BACK--

GGGRRRAAAAAA



-- HIS FILED TEETH LIKE RAZORS IN MY TRAPEZIUS--



CHUCK



FAPP

HA!
YOU SLOW, MAN!

HE'S RIGHT-- HE HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD--

--HE SHOWS ME
WHAT A FAST
KICK IS--



WHKK

--SOMETHING
EXPLODES IN
MY MIDSECTION--



--SUNLIGHT
BEHIND MY
EYES AS THE
PAIN RISES--

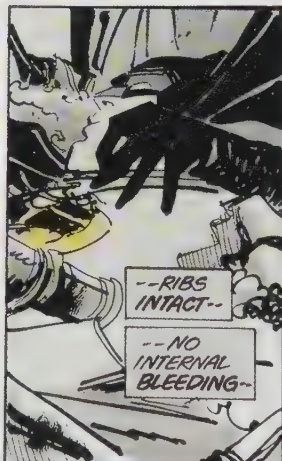


--A MOMENT OF
BLACKNESS--
TOO SOON
FOR THAT--

--TOO SOON--
WHAT'S WRONG
WITH ME--



NO--

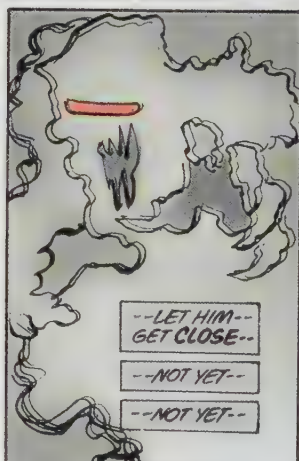


--RIBS
INTACT--

--NO
INTERNAL
BLEEDING--



--LET IT
LOOK
WORSE
THAN IT
IS--



--LET HIM--
GET CLOSE--

--NOT YET--

--NOT YET--



--GIVE HIM--
EVERYTHING
I'VE GOT--

--HIS NECK--
HOLDS--

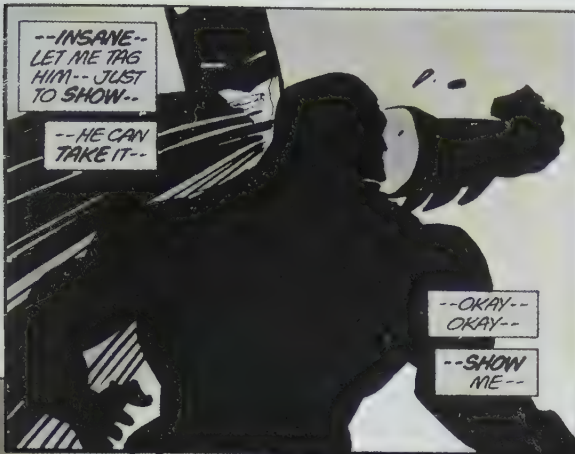
--HIS NOSE--
SHATTERS--

--BONE BITES
INTO MY
KNUCKLES--



--THE
IDIOT--

--STARTS
LAUGHING--

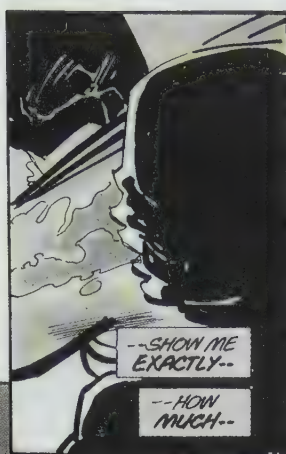


--INSANE--
LET ME TAG
HIM-- JUST
TO SHOW--

--HE CAN
TAKE IT--

--OKAY--
OKAY--

--SHOW
ME--



--SHOW ME
EXACTLY--

--HOW
MUCH--

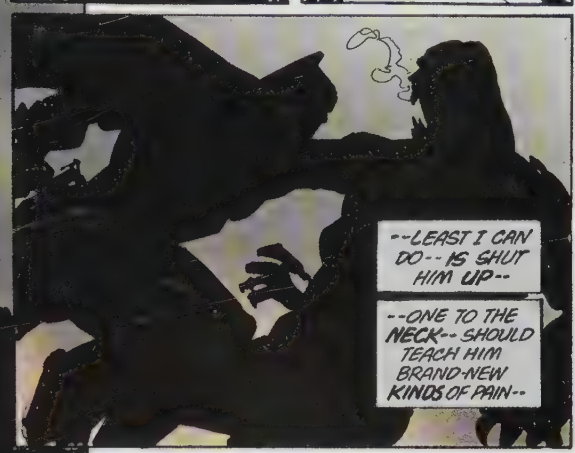


--IT TAKES
TO BREAK
YOU--



HA!

GETTIN
TIRED,
OLD MAN?



--LEAST I CAN
DO-- IS SHUT
HIM UP--

--ONE TO THE
NECK-- SHOULD
TEACH HIM
BRAND-NEW
KINDS OF PAIN--



THAK



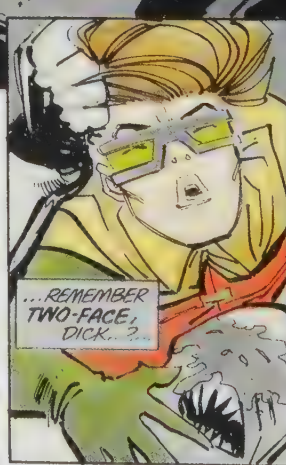
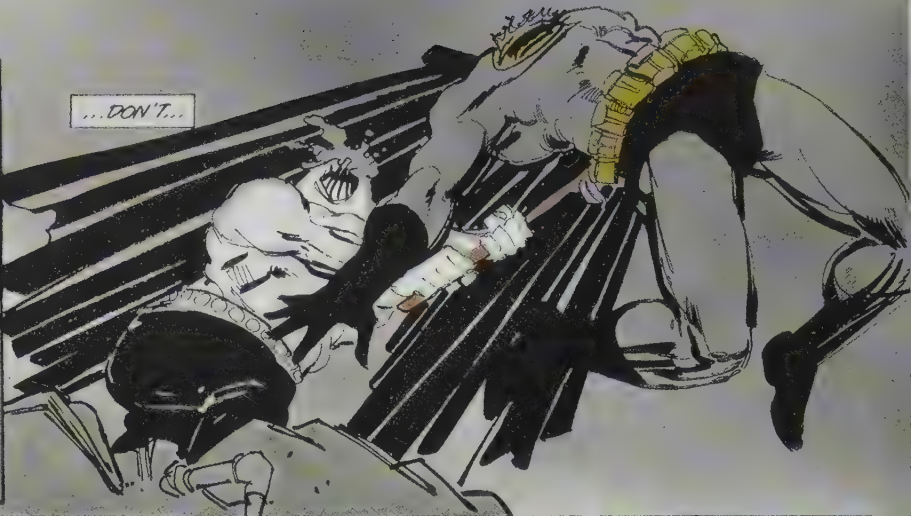
CHOK



KLUDD



KRAK KRAK KRAK

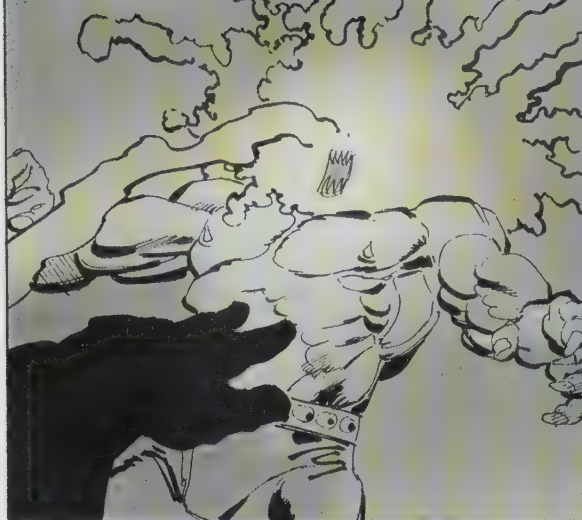




LUCKY...YOU'RE
LUCKY I'M
ALWAYS HERE...



...TO
BAIL YOU
OUT...



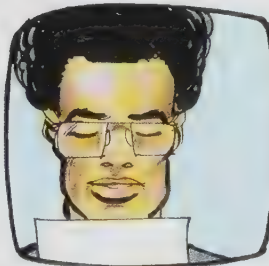
...DICK...



STILL
ALIVE--

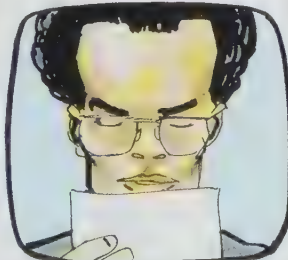
PORN STAR HOT GATES
TODAY SIGNED A TWELVE-
MILLION-DOLLAR CONTRACT
WITH **LANDMARK FILMS**
TO STAR IN A SCREEN
VERSION OF **SNOW WHITE**.
"I'M DOING IT FOR THE
KIDS," SAYS GATES...

IN OTHER NEWS, **GALAXY**
BROADCASTING PRESIDENT
JAMES OLSEN ASSURED
VIEWERS THAT THE TELEVISION
WRITERS STRIKE, NOW IN ITS
FOURTH YEAR, WILL NOT
AFFECT THE YEAR'S
PROGRAMMING...



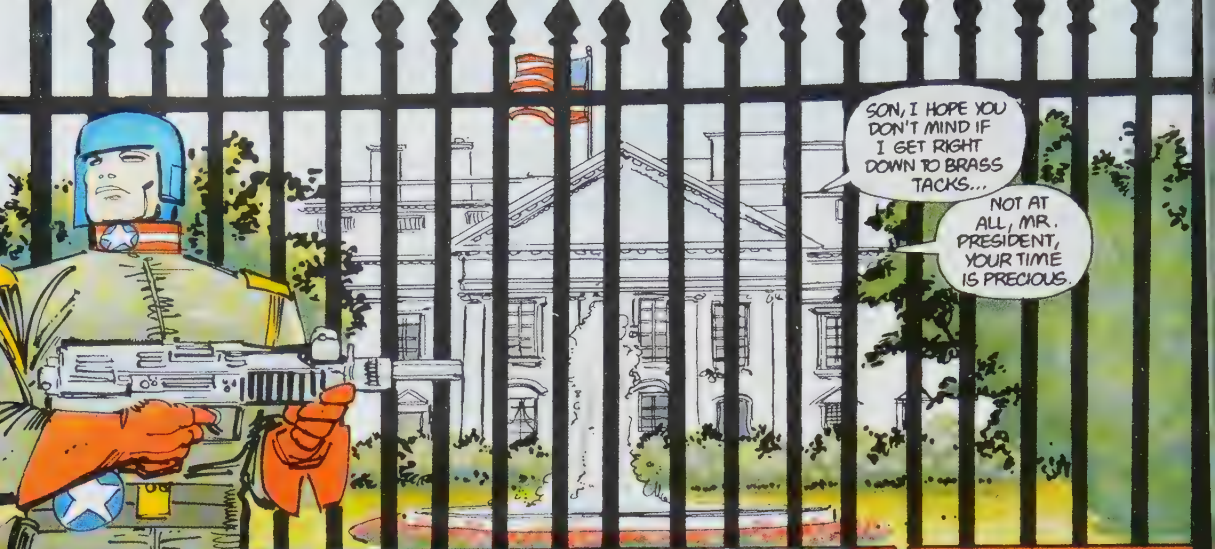
...THE **POLITICAL PERFORMANCE**
COMMISSION HAS AWARDED
THE PRESIDENT AN
UNPRECEDENTED FIVE
CREDIBILITY POINTS
FOR HIS HANDLING OF PUBLIC
PERCEPTION DURING THE
ECONOMIC CRISIS...

...THIS JUST IN--EYEWITNESSES
REPORT EXPLOSIONS
RIPPING ACROSS THE
GOTHAM DUMP. A NEWS
FOUR **HELICOPTER** IS ON
ITS WAY, FOLKS...



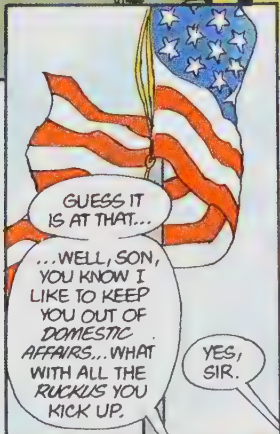
GENTLY,
NOW,
GENTLY,
GOOD
GIRL.

NOW
YOU JUST
RUN ALONG
HOME...



SON, I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND IF I GET RIGHT DOWN TO BRASS TACKS...

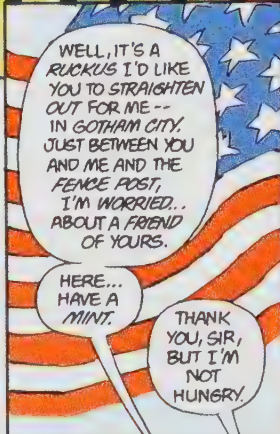
NOT AT ALL, MR. PRESIDENT, YOUR TIME IS PRECIOUS.



GUESS IT IS AT THAT...

...WELL, SON, YOU KNOW I LIKE TO KEEP YOU OUT OF DOMESTIC AFFAIRS... WHAT WITH ALL THE RUCKUS YOU KICK UP.

YES, SIR.



WELL, IT'S A RUCKUS I'D LIKE YOU TO STRAIGHTEN OUT FOR ME-- IN GOTHAM CITY, JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME AND THE FENCE POST, I'M WORRIED.. ABOUT A FRIEND OF YOURS.

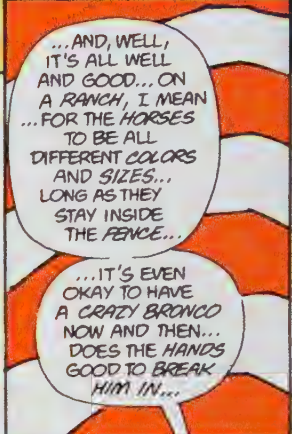
HERE... HAVE A MINT.

THANK YOU, SIR, BUT I'M NOT HUNGRY.



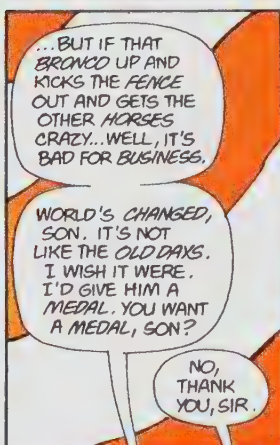
I LOVE MINTS...

SON, I LIKE TO THINK I LEARNED EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT RUNNING THIS COUNTRY ON MY RANCH... I KNOW IT'S CORNY, BUT I LIKE TO THINK IT...



...AND, WELL, IT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD... ON A RANCH, I MEAN ...FOR THE HORSES TO BE ALL DIFFERENT COLORS AND SIZES... LONG AS THEY STAY INSIDE THE FENCE...

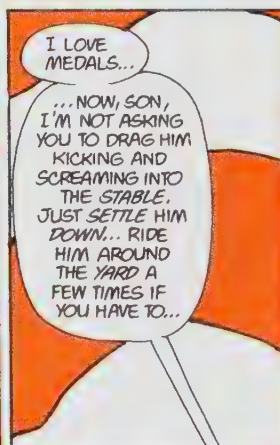
...IT'S EVEN OKAY TO HAVE A CRAZY BRONCO NOW AND THEN... DOES THE HANDS GOOD TO BREAK HIM IN...



...BUT IF THAT BRONCO UP AND KICKS THE FENCE OUT AND GETS THE OTHER HORSES CRAZY...WELL, IT'S BAD FOR BUSINESS.

WORLD'S CHANGED, SON. IT'S NOT LIKE THE OLD DAYS. I WISH IT WERE. I'D GIVE HIM A MEDAL. YOU WANT A MEDAL, SON?

NO, THANK YOU, SIR.



I LOVE MEDALS...

...NOW, SON, I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO DRAG HIM KICKING AND SCREAMING INTO THE STABLE. JUST SETTLE HIM DOWN... RIDE HIM AROUND THE YARD A FEW TIMES IF YOU HAVE TO...



SIR, I CAN TALK TO HIM, BUT--

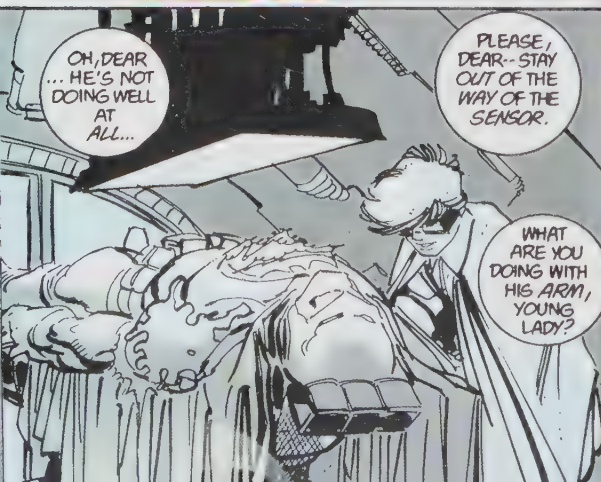
WELL, I'D SURE APPRECIATE IT... I'D JUST HATE TO SEE THINGS GET OUT OF...WELL, I'D JUST HATE THAT.

GIVE IT A SHOT, SON. YOUR COUNTRY'S COUNTING ON YOU...



...YES, SIR.

GOOD BOY...



OH, DEAR ... HE'S NOT DOING WELL AT ALL....

PLEASE, DEAR-- STAY OUT OF THE WAY OF THE SENSOR.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH HIS ARM, YOUNG LADY?

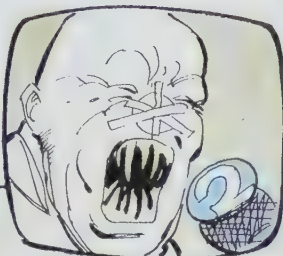
...A SCENE OF TOTAL WARFARE! EIGHTY-THREE MEMBERS OF THE MUTANT GANG HAVE BEEN FOUND, SUFFERING FROM BULLET AND SHRAPNEL WOUNDS.

AMONG THOSE CAPTURED BY POLICE IS THE MUTANT LEADER, WHO CLAIMS THE BATMAN USED MILITARY WEAPONS IN THE ATTACK-- AND ALSO CLAIMS TO HAVE DEFEATED THE BATMAN IN PERSONAL COMBAT...



BATMAN IS A COWARD.
I BROKE HIS BONES. I
CONQUERED THE FOOL. I
MADE HIM BEEG FOR MERCY.
ONLY BY CHEATING DID
HE ESCAPE ALIVE.

LET HIM GO TO HIS
WOMEN. LET HIM LICK
HIS WOUNDS. HIS DAY
IS DONE. GOTHAM
CITY BELONGS TO THE
MUTANTS.



CAREFUL,
MAN--YOU'RE
BOUNCING AROUND
TOO--

NO...
...NOT...
BOUNCING
ME... DON'T
WORRY...

STRETCHER'S...
ON A GYROSCOPE...
STAYS LEVEL...
NO MATTER
WHAT...

THAT'S
KEEN.



I...KNOW
WHAT SHE
DID, ALFRED.

WHERE... DID
YOU LEARN TO
SET AN ARM...
MAKE A SPLINT...?

GIRL
SCOUTS.



WHAT'S...
YOUR
NAME...



CARRIE.
CARRIE
KELLEY.



ROBIN.



MINE'S
BRUCE...

SIR!
YOU'RE
DELIRIOUS, SIR.
YOU JUST REST
NOW--DON'T
TRY TO
SPEAK--



WE'RE
ONLY MOMENTS
FROM THE
HOSPITAL--

NO...
HOSPITAL,
ALFRED...

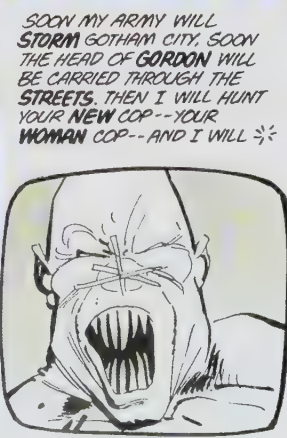
...THE
CAVE...



BUT
SIR--

THE
CAVE...

...AND
ROBIN...
COMES
WITH
US...



SOON MY ARMY WILL
STORM GOTHAM CITY. SOON
THE HEAD OF GORDON WILL
BE CARRIED THROUGH THE
STREETS. THEN I WILL HUNT
YOUR NEW COP--YOUR
WOMAN COP--AND I WILL ❄

THE REST OF
THE MUTANT LEADER'S
STATEMENT IS
UNFIT FOR
BROADCAST.



I DON'T
THINK YOU
REALIZE
WHAT YOU'RE
SUGGESTING,
DR. WOLPER.

HARVEY DENT
DIDN'T EXACTLY
BRING US
POSITIVE
PUBLICITY,
AND THIS
ONE...

I KNOW,
GLEN. I
KNOW--

ARKHAM
HOME
FOR THE
EMOTIONALLY TROUBLED

--BUT I'M NOT
TALKING ABOUT
A RELEASE. THIS
WILL BE A
CONTROLLED
ENVIRONMENT--
AND IT WOULD
BE SO GOOD
FOR HIM.

HIM
I'M NOT
WORRIED
ABOUT.

DR. GLEN F
CHIEF ADM

COME NOW, GLEN!
HE'S BEEN
NEARLY COMATOSE
FOR MORE THAN
A DECADE. IF
YOU'D JUST
TALK WITH HIM...
FOR FIVE
MINUTES,
GLEN...

I DON'T
KNOW,
THERE'S
SOMETHING
...WELL...
SOMETHING
SUPERNATURAL
ABOUT
THAT ONE.

HIEF ADMINIS

PUSH

NOW THAT'S A FINE WAY TO
SPEAK IN A HOUSE OF MEDICINE,
ISN'T IT? LISTEN-- PUT ALL
THE GUARDS YOU WANT IN THE
STUDIO, IF IT WILL MAKE YOU
FEEL BETTER.

FIVE MINUTES,
GLEN. HE IS A
PATIENT.

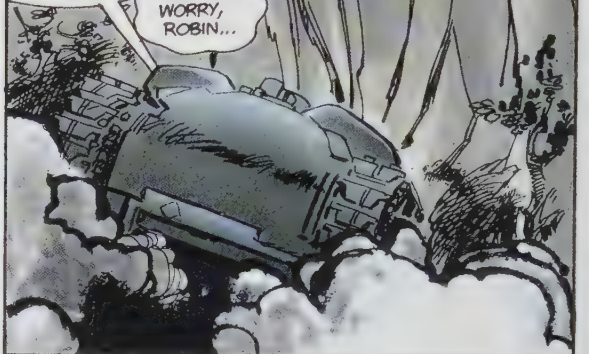
LEN FORB
ADMINISTRATOR

OKAY, ALL
RIGHT.
FIVE
MINUTES.



'SCUSE ME, WE'RE
HEADING STRAIGHT
FOR A BRICK
WALL.

DON'T...
WORRY,
ROBIN...



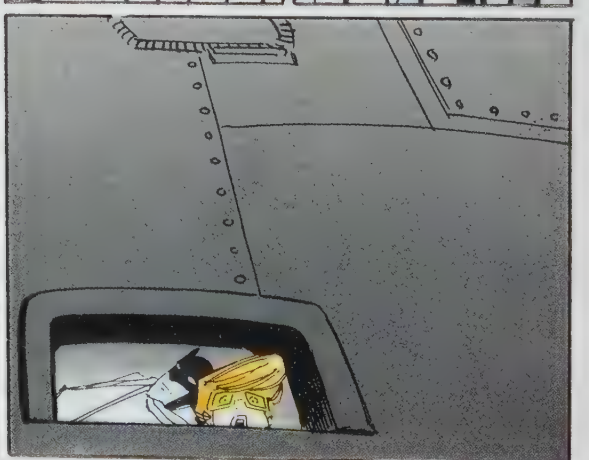
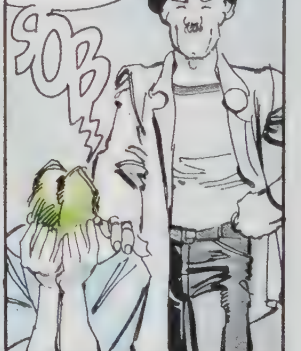
...IT'S JUST
...A
HOLOGRAM...



SIR--I URGE YOU TO REJECT
DR. WOLPER'S SUGGESTION.
I DON'T DESERVE THIS
CHARITY... MY CRIMES... WERE
HORRIBLE BEYOND
ALL WORDS... I AM
BEYOND
REDEMPTION.



PLEASE-- JUST
LOCK ME AWAY--
FROM HUMAN
MEMORY...





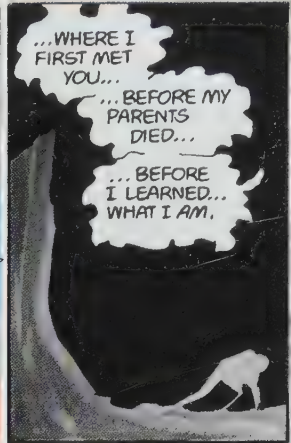
I LEAVE
THEM
BEHIND
ME...



I LEAVE...
IT ALL
BEHIND
ME...



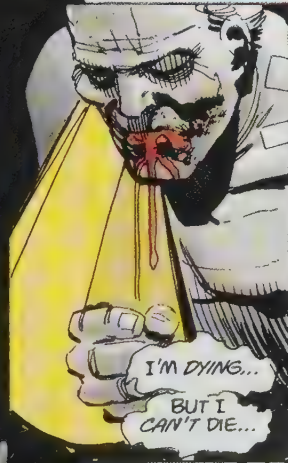
I GO...
...TO THE
DARK
PLACE...



...WHERE I
FIRST MET
YOU...

... BEFORE MY
PARENTS
DIED...

... BEFORE
I LEARNED...
WHAT I AM.

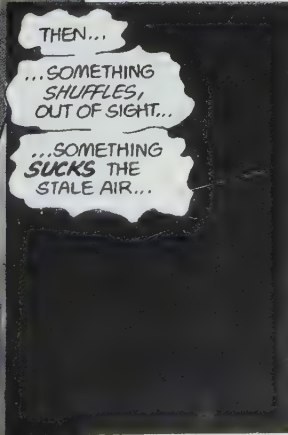


I'M DYING...
BUT I
CAN'T DIE...



I'M NOT
FINISHED YET.

... AND YOU'RE
NOT FINISHED
WITH ME.



THEN...

...SOMETHING
SHUFFLES,
OUT OF SIGHT...

...SOMETHING
SUCKS THE
STALE AIR...

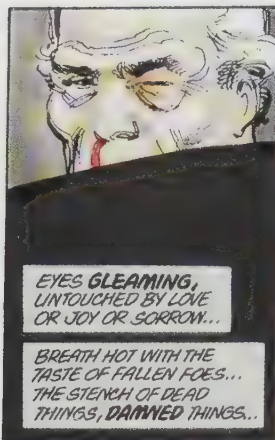


... AND
HISSES.

THE
CAVE...



GLIDING
WITH ANCIENT
GRACE...



EYES GLEAMING,
UNTOUCHED BY LOVE
OR JOY OR SORROW...

BREATH HOT WITH THE
TASTE OF FALLEN FOES...
THE STENCH OF DEAD
THINGS, DAMNED THINGS...



SURELY THE
FIERCEST SURVIVOR
... THE PUREST
WARRIOR...

GLARING,
HATING...



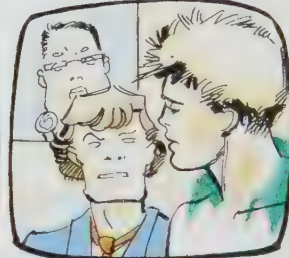
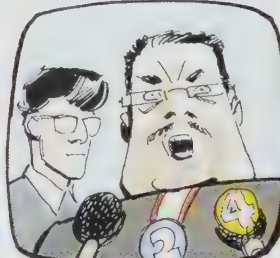
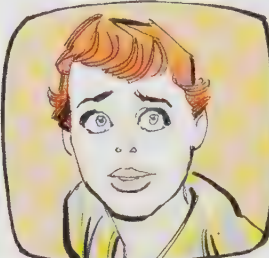
... CLAIMING
ME AS YOUR
OWN.

WE WILL COME FOR OUR
LEADER. WE WILL **RAPE**
GOTHAM. WE WILL **RAPE**
GOTHAM. WE WILL **RAPE**
GOTHAM. WE WILL **TASTE**
GOTHAM'S **BLOOD**.

ON HEARING THIS MESSAGE
FROM THE MUTANTS,
COMMISSIONER GORDON PUT
HIMSELF AND HIS MEN
ON TWENTY-FOUR HOUR
ALERT-- WHILE THE MAYOR
WAS QUICK TO SPEAK OUT...

THIS WHOLE SITUATION IS
THE RESULT OF GORDON'S
INCOMPETENCE-- AND OF
THE TERRORIST ACTIONS OF
THE **BATMAN**. I WISH TO
SIT DOWN WITH THE
MUTANT LEADER... TO
NEGOTIATE A **SETTLEMENT**...

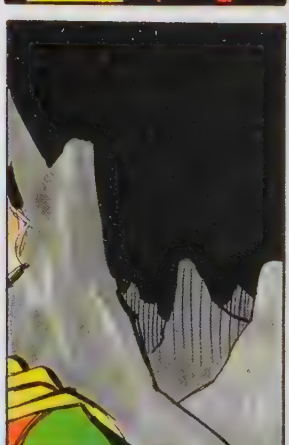
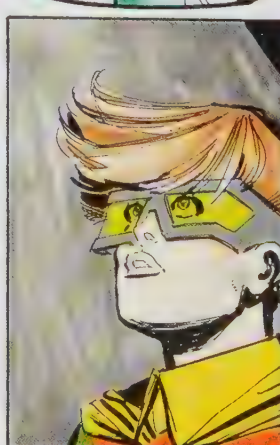
WHAT DO YOU
THINK, TRISH?
HIS HONOR
GONE NUTS?



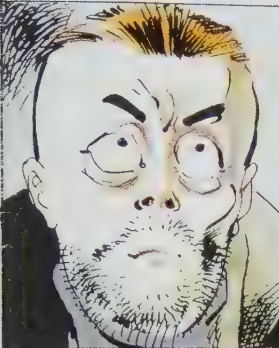
NOT AT ALL, BILL. FRANKLY
I EXPECT THE MAYOR'S
CREDIBILITY RATING TO
GO THROUGH THE **ROOF**,
ESPECIALLY IF HE'S
SUCCESSFUL IN THE
NEGOTIATIONS.

THIS, COMBINED WITH HIS
STRONG STAND ON **BATMAN**--
AND MAKING A WOMAN
THE NEXT POLICE
COMMISSIONER-- WELL,
I THINK WE'VE GOT A
WHOLE NEW **MAYOR** ON
OUR HANDS--

-- PUBLIC
PERCEPTION--
WISE,
THAT
IS.



ARNOLD CRIMP FINGERS THE COLD STEEL THING IN HIS POCKET AND STARES AT THE MOVIE MARQUEE AND DOES NOT THROW UP.



HE THINKS ABOUT LED ZEPPELIN AND HOW THEY ARE TRYING TO KILL HIM.



HE HAD NOT KNOWN ABOUT LED ZEPPELIN UNTIL FATHER DON ON TV HAD EXPLAINED IT LAST NIGHT.

FATHER DON SAID THAT LED ZEPPELIN HID A PRAYER TO SATAN IN THEIR SONG "STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN."

THEY HID IT VERY WELL. THEY RECORDED IT BACKWARDS.



ARNOLD CRIMP TOOK THE ALBUM FROM THE RECORD STORE WHERE HE WORKED UNTIL THEY FIRED HIM THIS AFTERNOON AND TRANSFERRED "STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN" TO TAPE.



THEN HE PLAYED THE TAPE BACKWARDS.

HE PLAYED IT FORTY-SEVEN TIMES UNTIL HE WAS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT FATHER DON WAS RIGHT.

HE LOST HIS TEMPER AND BROKE THE RECORD INTO FOUR PIECES THAT WERE EXACTLY THE SAME SIZE.



THE YOUNG GIRL WHO WAS PAINTED JUST LIKE A WHORE SCREAMED FOR THE MANAGER AND THE MANAGER WALKED OUT FROM THE BACK ROOM AND WOULDN'T EVEN LISTEN AND FIRED ARNOLD CRIMP.



BUT THE YOUNG GIRL WHO WAS PAINTED LIKE A WHORE DIDN'T BELIEVE HIM.



THAT WAS THIS AFTERNOON, IN THE STORE. HE EXPLAINED IT TO HER VERY CAREFULLY. SHE SAID AWFUL WORDS.



THAT WAS THIS AFTERNOON, IN THE STORE.

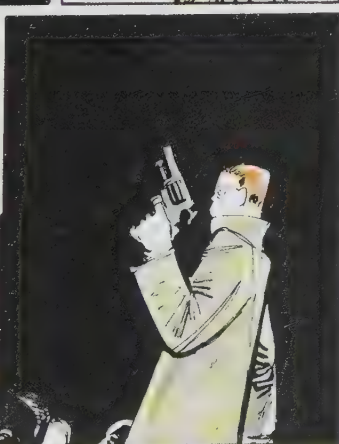


EVERY MORNING AND EVENING UNTIL TONIGHT OF COURSE HE HAD WALKED SIX BLOCKS OUT OF HIS WAY TO AVOID THIS NEIGHBORHOOD.

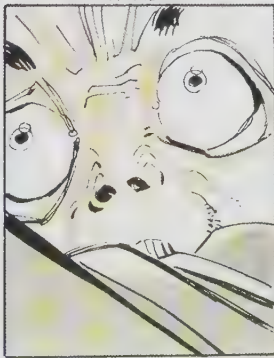


ROW ON ROW ON ROW ON ROW OF PICTURES OF WOMEN AND WORDS AND WORDS AND WORDS. HE STOPPED AT THIS ONE THE ONE HE IS IN RIGHT NOW AND READ THE TITLE THAT DID NOT MAKE HIM THROW UP.

THE TITLE IS "MY SWEET SATAN," WHICH IS WHAT ARNOLD CRIMP IS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN HE HEARD WHEN HE PLAYED "STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN" BACKWARDS.

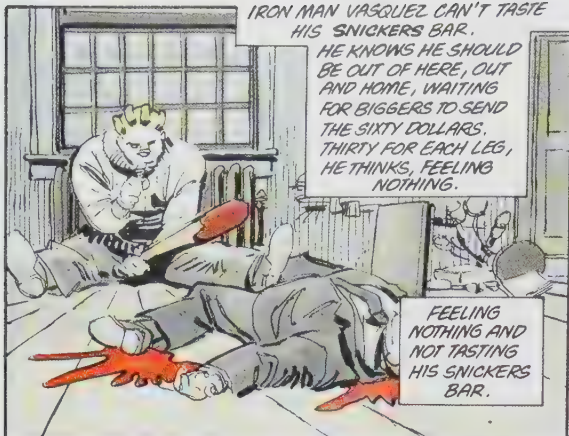


ON THE SCREEN A NUN A NUN IS DOING SOMETHING AND SHE'S PAINTED EXACTLY LIKE A WHORE--



THREE SLAIN IN BATMAN-INSPIRED PORN THEATER SHOOT-OUT. DETAILS TO FOLLOW...





IRON MAN VASQUEZ CAN'T TASTE HIS SNICKERS BAR. HE KNOWS HE SHOULD BE OUT OF HERE, OUT AND HOME, WAITING FOR BIGGERS TO SEND THE SIXTY DOLLARS. THIRTY FOR EACH LEG, HE THINKS, FEELING NOTHING.

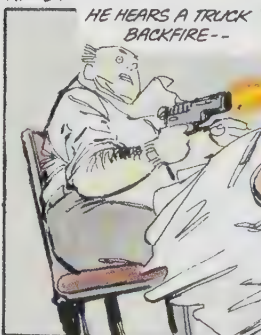
FEELING NOTHING AND NOT TASTING HIS SNICKERS BAR.

BROKEN NOSE VASQUEZ, BIGGERS HAD CALLED HIM. JUST LAUGHED WHEN IRON MAN CRIED LIKE A BABY AND BEGGED FOR ANOTHER FIGHT.

THEN BIGGERS PUT HIS FAT ARM AROUND IRON MAN'S SHOULDER AND TOLD HIM THE ONLY WAY HE COULD MAKE MONEY NOW.

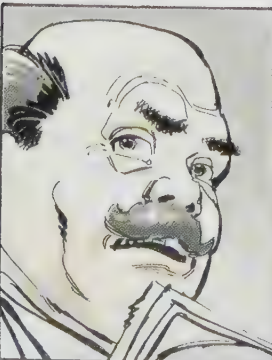


THE NEXT TIME IRON MAN VASQUEZ FEELS SOMETHING, HE'S STANDING IN A RESTAURANT WITH SOMETHING ON HIS FACE AND A GUN IN HIS HAND.



HE HEARS A TRUCK BACKFIRE--

AND WHEN HE HEARS THE WOMAN SCREAM DOWN THE STREET, HE KNOWS HE SHOULD BE AFRAID.



INSTEAD HE'S LOOKING AT THE ALARM SYSTEM THAT COST HIM TWO MONTHS' PROFITS AND THE IRON BARS OVER HIS WINDOWS THAT MAKE HIS BEAUTIFUL SHOP LOOK LIKE A PRISON...



HE PUSHES THROUGH THE COTTON IN HIS HEAD AND REMEMBERS THE LAST TIME HE FELT SOMETHING.



SUDDENLY HIS EYES STING AND IRON MAN HURTS ALL OVER AND REALIZES HE'S READING ABOUT A MAN.



IT WAS IN THE FIRST AND ONLY ROUND OF HIS LAST FIGHT. HIS LAST FIGHT WHEN CAPTAIN WARRIOR HIT HIM ACROSS THE NOSE.



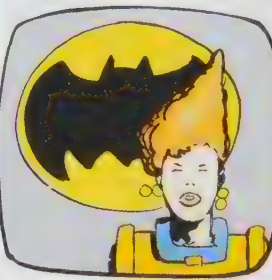
A MAN WHO DRESSES UP LIKE A MONSTER AND MAKES THINGS RIGHT.



A DEVOUT CATHOLIC, PEPPI SPANDECK CAN'T SAY HE APPROVES OF THIS BATMAN.



CRAZED WOULD-BE KILLER DRESSES AS BATMAN-- AFTER THIS...

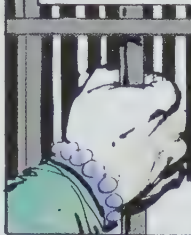


HE CAN FEEL HIS PULSE, JUST BELOW HIS EARS. HE KNOWS HE'S GONE CRAZY. BUT THE MUGGER IS RUNNING, AFRAID. AFRAID OF PEPI!

NBODY IS HURT BADLY ENOUGH FOR THIS TO MAKE THE NEWS.

...AN UPDATE--THE MAYOR IS THIS MINUTE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE MUTANT LEADER, WHO HAS AGREED TO MEET HIM ALONE. MEANWHILE, THE MAYOR'S LEADERSHIP QUOTIENT HAS SOARED-- EXCUSE ME...

I'D EXPECTED THEM TO BE SCREAMING AND FIGHTING. BUT THEY STAND LIKE A CAPTIVE ARMY. I'D LIKE TO THINK THEY'RE CRAZY-- BUT HERE I AM, WALKING THE MAYOR TO MEET THEIR LEADER--



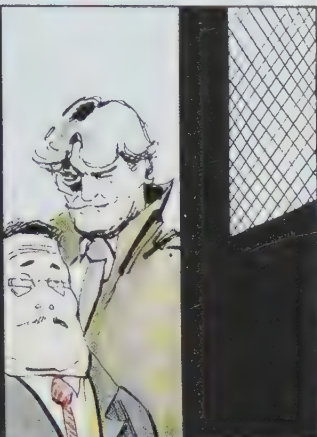
-- WITH ALL THE CEREMONY OF A MILITARY CONFERENCE.



THE CELL DOOR OPENS. THE AIR GOES THICK. I FEEL THE MAYOR SHUDDER, IN TIME WITH ME.

I ASK HIM ONE MORE TIME IF HE IS SURE HE WANTS TO GO IT ALONE. HE GURGLES, AND NODS.

I DON'T KNOW IF I'D CALL IT COURAGE.



I HEAR A NERVOUS GIGGLE AND AN ANIMAL GROWL. I HEAR HANDCUFF LINKS SNAP.

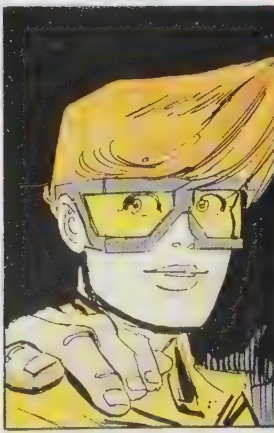
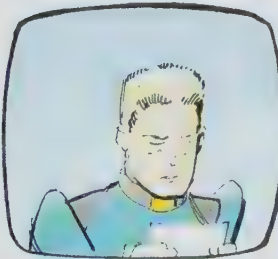
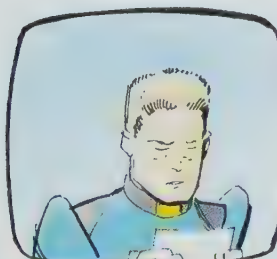


I SEE SOMETHING I'LL TAKE TO MY GRAVE.

SOME IDIOT STOPS ME FROM DOING THE OBVIOUS THING.

...THE MAYOR IS DEAD.

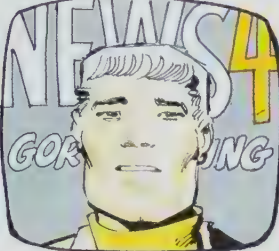
THE MUTANT LEADER RIPPED THE MAYOR'S THROAT OUT WITH HIS TEETH. THE MUTANT HAS BEEN RETURNED TO HIS CELL. MORE ON THIS AS WE GET IT.





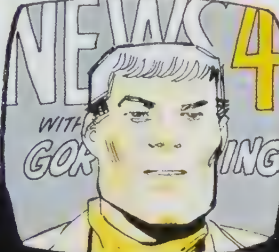
THAT'S RIGHT--WE'VE GOT
POLICE VIDEOTAPE OF
THE MAYOR'S MURDER!
ONLY ON CHANNEL TWO!
NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH.
STAY TUNED.

SOVIET DESTROYERS HAVE
BEEN SIGHTED IN THE
WATERS OFF CORTO MALTESE...
AND, IN GOTHAM CITY,
IT ALSO LOOKS LIKE
IMPENDING WAR-- AS
THE CITY GIRDS ITSELF
FOR THE MUTANT ATTACK...



A FRIGHTENED SILENCE HAS
FALLEN OVER GOTHAM.
SILENCE BROKEN ONLY BY
THE URGENT WORDS OF
DEPUTY MAYOR-- EXCUSE
ME-- MAYOR STEVENSON...

IF THERE ARE ANY
MEMBERS OF THE MUTANT
ORGANIZATION LISTENING,
PLEASE-- PLEASE-- WE
ARE STILL OPEN TO
NEGOTIATION...



YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH
QUITE A LOT, MASTER
BRUCE. IT FOLLOWS
THAT YOUR JUDGMENT
MAY BE IMPAIRED.

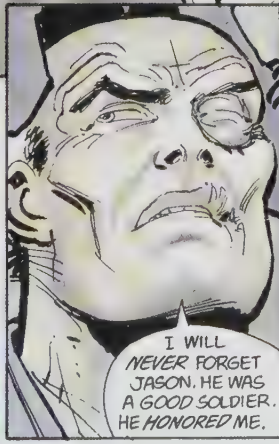


SHE'S YOUNG.
SHE'S SMART.
SHE'S BRAVE.

WITH HER, I
MIGHT BE ABLE
TO END THIS
MUTANT
NONSENSE
ONCE AND
FOR ALL.

YOU SEE, IT
ALL GETS DOWN
TO THEIR
LEADER. THEY
WORSHIP
HIM...

SHE'S A
SWEET
YOUNG
CHILD.



...PLEASE...



I DON'T CARE
IF HIS
MOTHER'S
PREGNANT!

W. STEVE
GORDON
COMMISSIONER
OF POLICE

HE'S ON TIME
-- OR I'LL HAVE
HIS BADGE!

SLAM

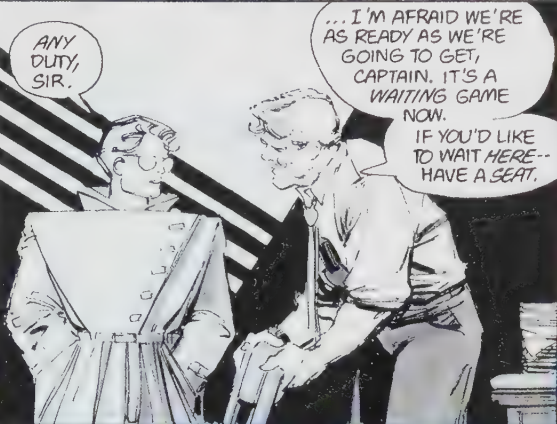
W. STEVE
GORDON

-- COMMISSIONER,
I'M REPORTING
FOR DUTY.

FEW DAYS
EARLY,
AREN'T
YOU--



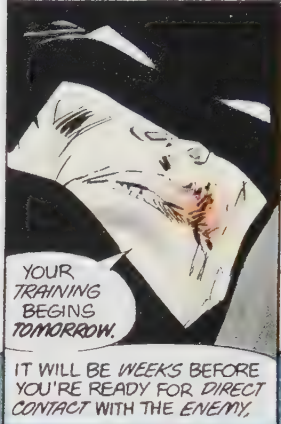
-- CAPTAIN
YINDEL?



ANY
DUTY,
SIR.

... I'M AFRAID WE'RE
AS READY AS WE'RE
GOING TO GET,
CAPTAIN. IT'S A
WAITING GAME
NOW.

IF YOU'D LIKE
TO WAIT HERE--
HAVE A SEAT.



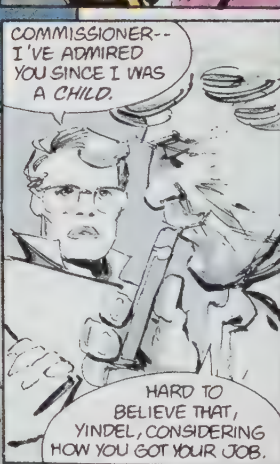
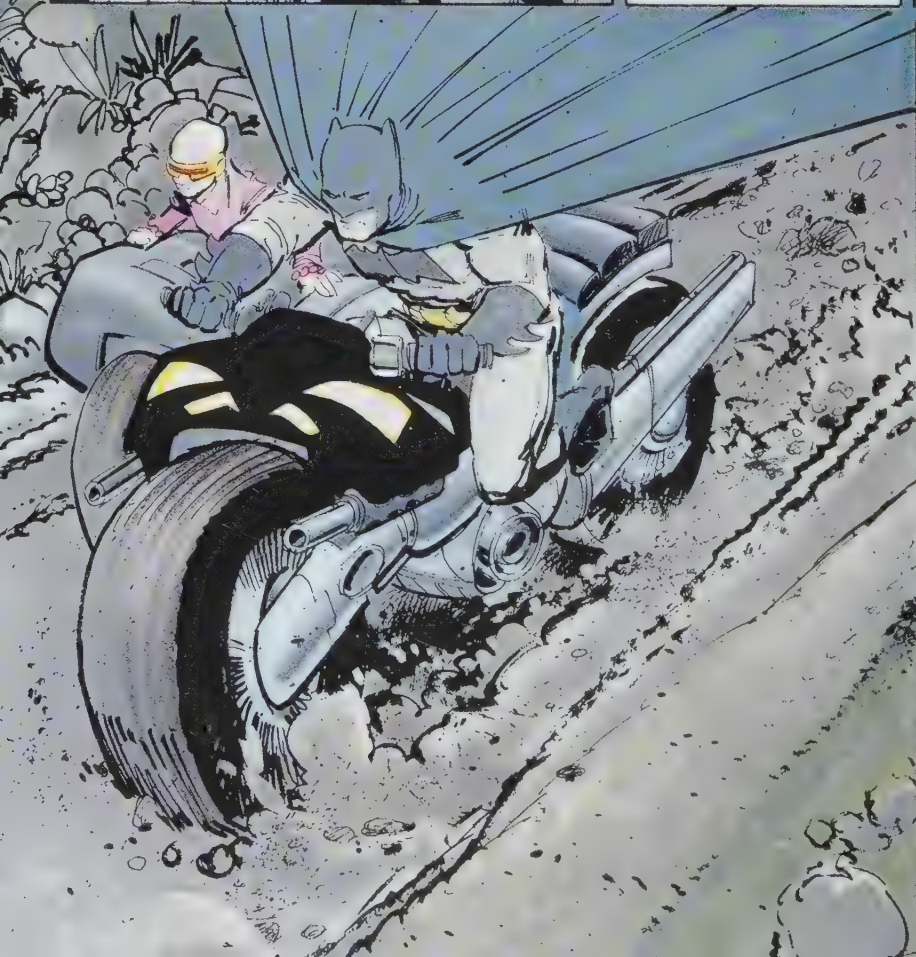
YOUR
TRAINING
BEGINS
TOMORROW.

IT WILL BE WEEKS BEFORE
YOU'RE READY FOR DIRECT
CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY.



I HAVE
DETAILED
TONIGHT'S
PLAN.

ALTER IT IN
ANY WAY--
TAKE ANY
CHANCES--
AND YOU'RE
FIRED.



COMMISSIONER--
I'VE ADMIRER
YOU SINCE I WAS
A CHILD.

HARD
TO
BELIEVE THAT,
YINDEL, CONSIDERING
HOW YOU GOT YOUR JOB.



YES, GALLAGHER. HE LOVES
I DON'T LIKE
HIM.

I'M AMAZED AT
HIS JUDGMENT.
I'VE READ YOUR
RECORD.



YOU GOT ANY KIDS, OFFICER?

SHUT UP.

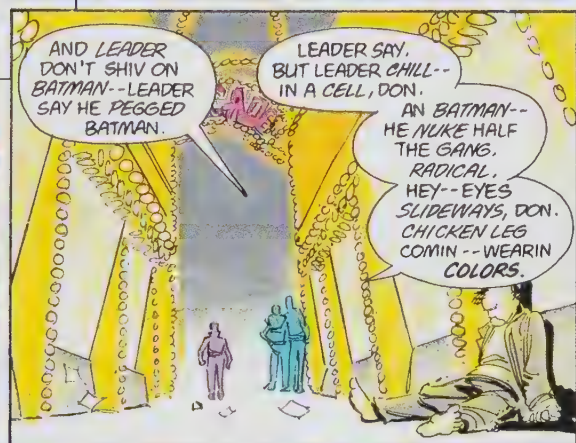
THANK YOU. I DON'T THINK HE'S READ IT. HE ONLY SEEMED TO CARE HOW I FELT ABOUT BATMAN.

LET'S...NOT TALK ABOUT BATMAN, SHALL WE?



THAT BATMAN-- HE NASTY. TOSSED SPIKE RIGHT THROUGH TH SIGN, DON.

I FIGURE THAT REAL COOL, ROB. FIGURE FIXING THE SIGN DIDN'T BILLY UP TH PRICE OF TH GAMES.



AND LEADER DON'T SHIV ON BATMAN--LEADER SAY HE PEGGED BATMAN.

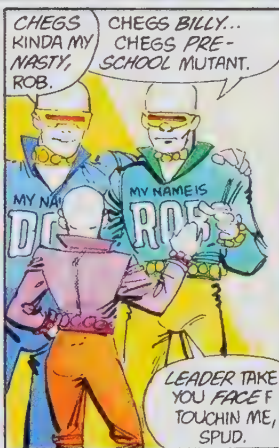
LEADER SAY, BUT LEADER CHILL-- IN A CELL, DON.

AN BATMAN-- HE NUKE HALF THE GANG. RADICAL. HEY--EYES SLIDEWAYS, DON. CHICKEN LEG COMIN--WEARIN COLORS.



MY MON LICKEN CHEGS--

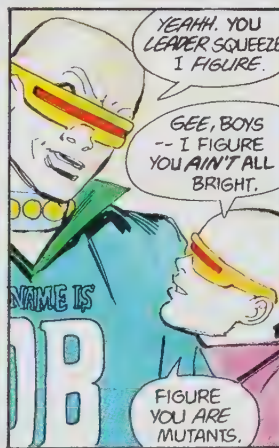
ALL LINES ARE BUSY.



CHEGS KINDA MY NASTY, ROB.

CHEGS BILLY... CHEGS PRE-SCHOOL MUTANT.

LEADER TAKE YOU FACE F TOUCHIN ME, SPUD.



YEAHH. YOU LEADER SQUEEZE I FIGURE.

GEE, BOYS -- I FIGURE YOU AIN'T ALL BRIGHT.

FIGURE YOU ARE MUTANTS.



WE MUTANTS! WE SLICER-DICERS!

I'M SURE. THAT'S WHY YOU AT TH PIPE.

I DON'T SHIV.



BAND! SHE DON'T SHIV.

AIN'T FAN. WHAT PIPE, CHICKEN LEG?

EARS ONLY, SPUD. AS IN MEMBERS.



WE MUTANTS! WHAT'S THIS PIPE?

PIPE, SPUD. WEST RIVER AND FORTY. ATTENDANCE. AS IN MANDATORY.



SURE. TH PIPE. WE HEARD.

DIDN'T HEAR IT FROM ME.

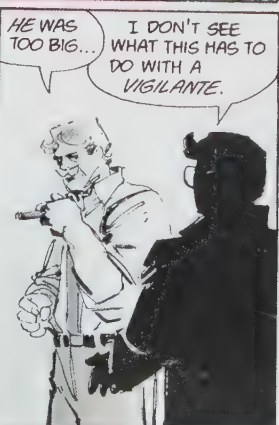
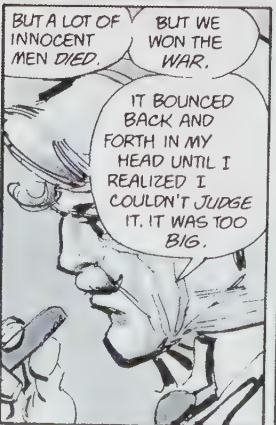
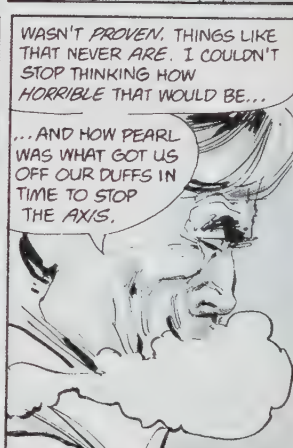
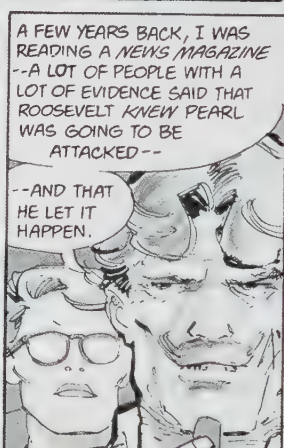
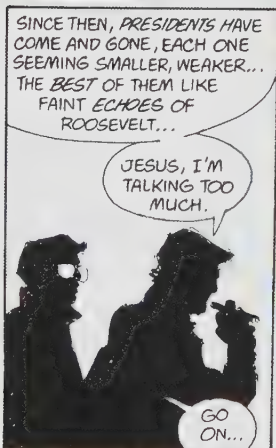
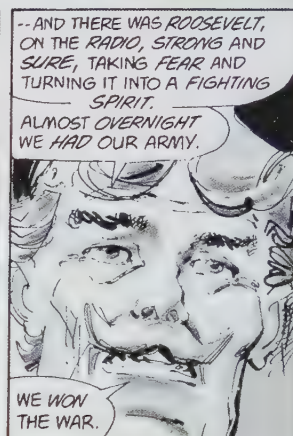
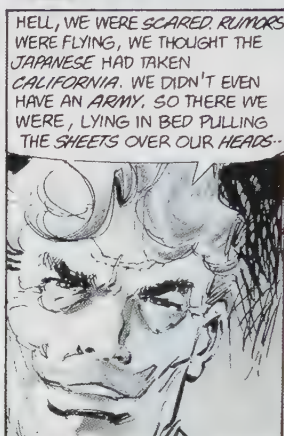
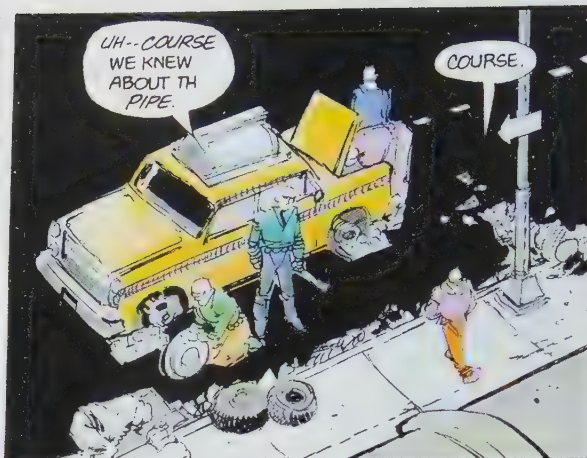
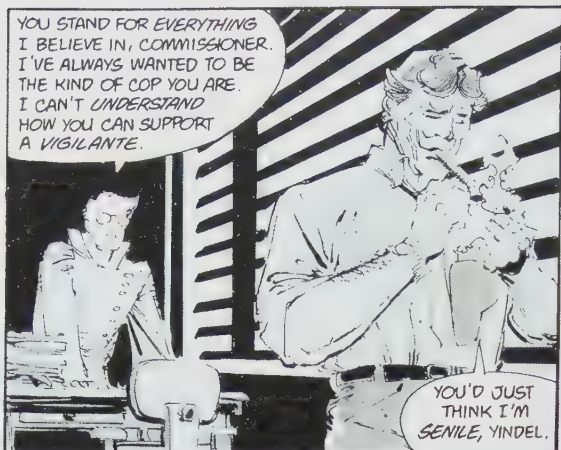
SPUD.

REAL COO! ROB.



JUST ASKING, OFFICER.

I LOVE KIDS.



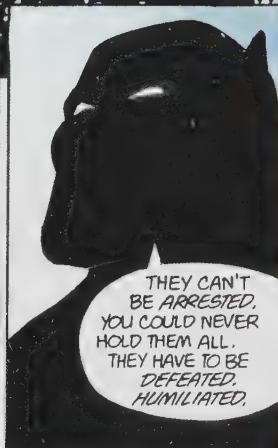


THERE'S THOUSANDS OF THEM, BATMAN! WHY? WHY THERE?

BECAUSE I WANT THEM THERE, JIM.

WE COULD MOVE IN--WITH HELICOPTERS AND ALL THE MEN WE HAVE... MAYBE THE NATIONAL GUARD--

NO, JIM.



THEY CAN'T BE ARRESTED. YOU COULD NEVER HOLD THEM ALL. THEY HAVE TO BE DEFEATED. HUMILIATED.



IT'S THE ONLY WAY, JIM. I'M COUNTING ON YOUR HELP.

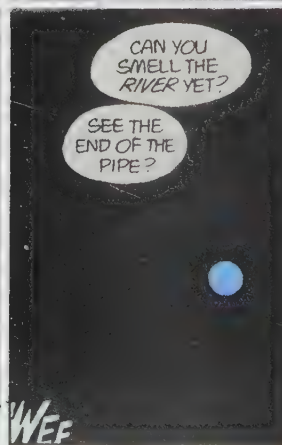
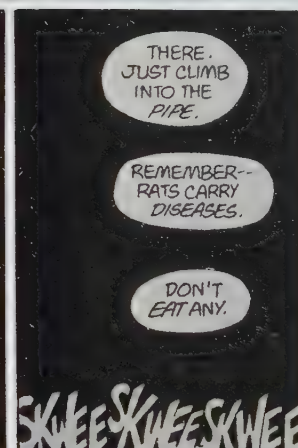
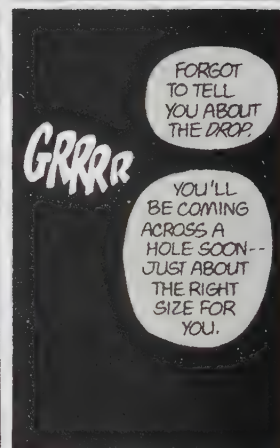
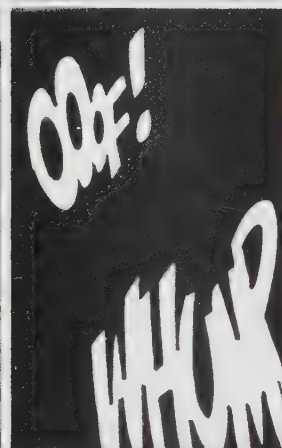
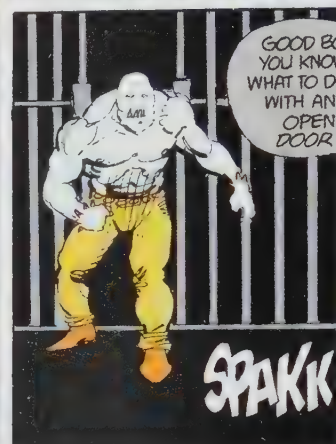
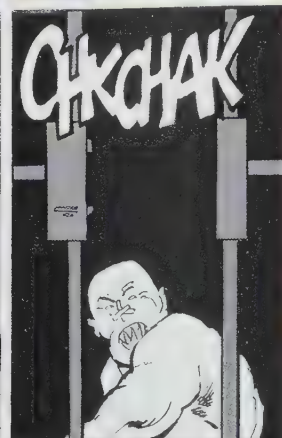
ONE LAST TIME, OLD FRIEND.

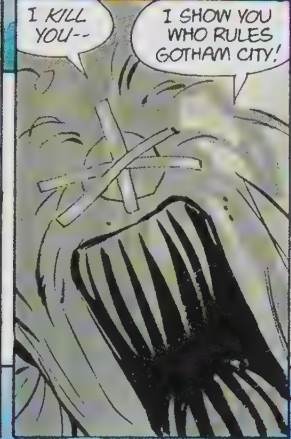


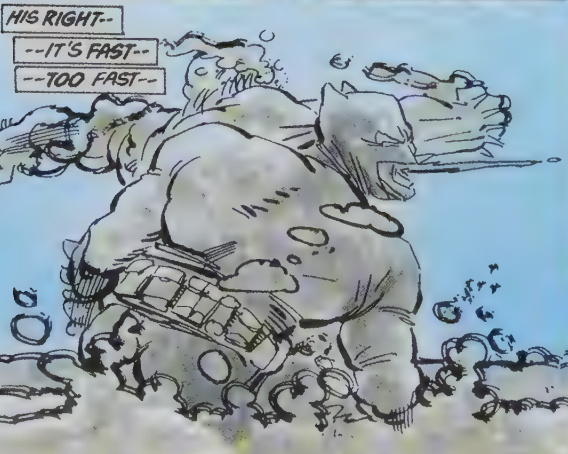
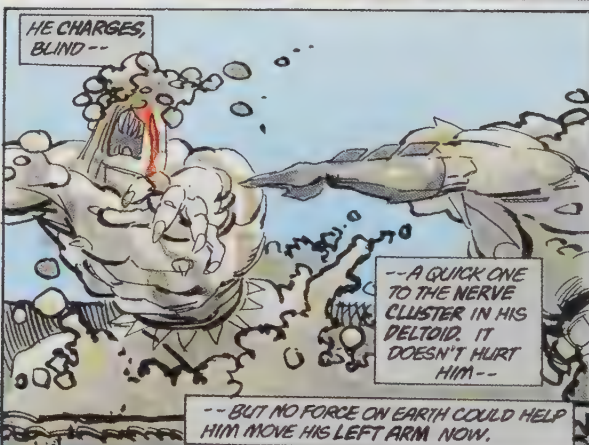
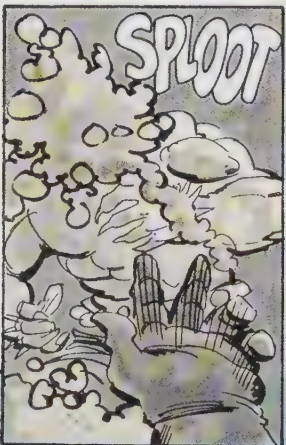
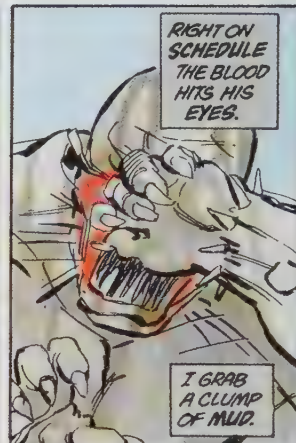
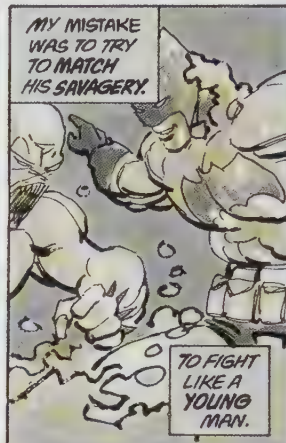
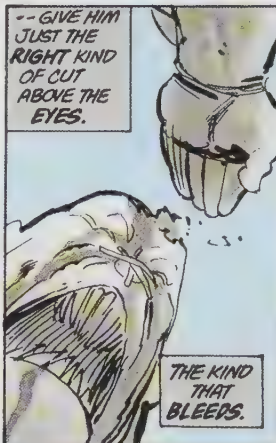
HOW ABOUT A WIFE? GOT A SWEET LITTLE WIFE?

SHUT UP--

THOMPSON! YOU'RE RELIEVED.









BLACKNESS--
COMES IN FROM
THE EDGES--

I GET SICK OF
THE ARM--



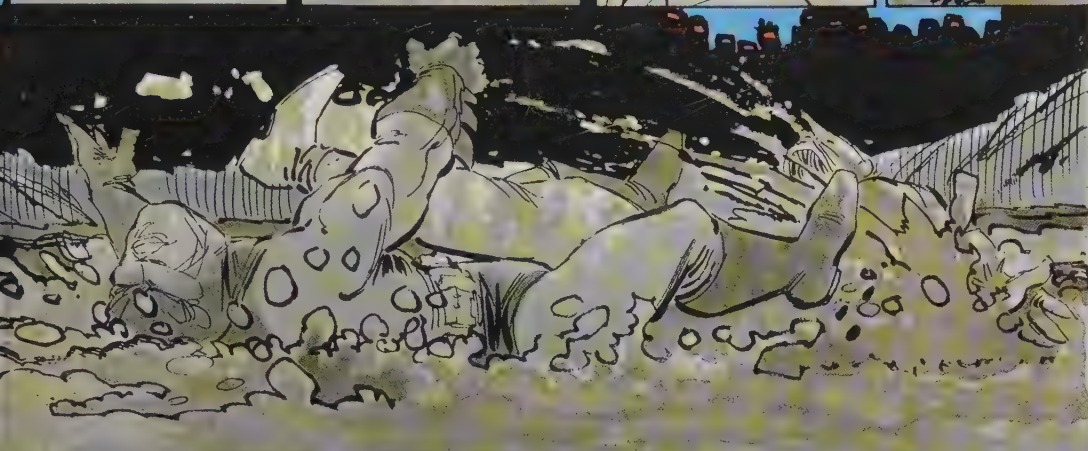
-- AND KILL
IT BELOW
THE ELBOW.



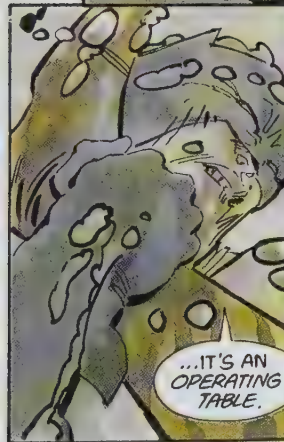
HE SPINS-- AT
THE PERFECT
MOMENT--

-- GOES FOR
MY THROAT--

-- HAVE TO--
TAKE US
DOWN--



YOU DON'T
... GET IT,
BOY...
THIS ISN'T
A MUDHOLE...



...IT'S AN
OPERATING
TABLE.



AND I'M THE
SURGEON.



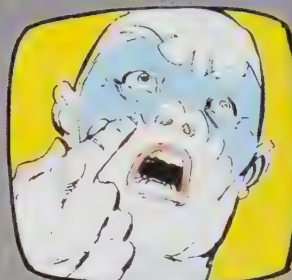
SOMETHING
TELLS ME
TO STOP
WITH THE
LEG.



I DON'T
LISTEN
TO IT.



THE MUTANTS ARE DEAD. THE MUTANTS ARE HISTORY. THIS IS THE MARK OF THE FUTURE. GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO THE BATMAN.



JUST AS I PREDICTED--THE BATMAN HAS INFECTED THE YOUTH OF GOTHAM--POISONED THEM WITH AN INSIDIOUS EXCUSE FOR THE MOST VIOLENTLY ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR.

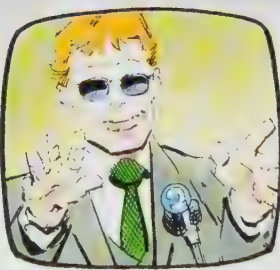
WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT LETTING THE MUTANT LEADER GO. ONCE HE IS MOBILE HE WILL BE ARRAIGNED--TO SEE IF HE IS FIT TO STAND TRIAL, OR THE VICTIM OF MENTAL ILLNESS.

BATMAN? I'M PLAIN TIRED OF HEARING ABOUT HIM. HIM AND HOW HE DOESN'T LET THINGS STOP HIM OR JUST LET THINGS GO THE WAY US HUMANS DO. WE COUNT TOO.

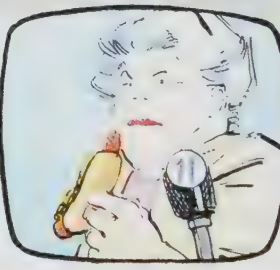
THOUGH SURROUNDED BY SINFULNESS AND TERROR, WE MUST NOT BECOME SO EMBITTERED THAT WE TAKE SATAN'S METHODS AS OUR OWN.



DO NOT EXPECT ANY FURTHER STATEMENTS. THE SONS OF THE BATMAN DO NOT TALK. WE ACT. LET GOTHAM'S CRIMINALS BEWARE. THEY ARE ABOUT TO ENTER HELL.



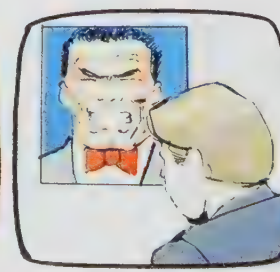
SO A BUNCH OF PSYCHOPATHS TURN ON CRIMINALS, INSTEAD OF INNOCENTS. FOR THIS YOU WANT TO BLAME BATMAN?



THE PRESIDENT IS CONCERNED, YOU CAN BANK ON THAT, PAL. BUT DON'T EXPECT HIM TO GO JUMPING IN ON GOTHAM'S OWN FINE MAYOR AND GOVERNOR. NO, SIR. THIS IS AMERICA.



I SAID NO COMMENT.

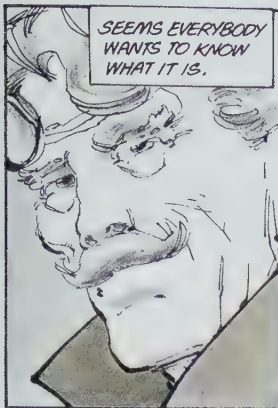


LET ME TELL YOU MY SECRET.

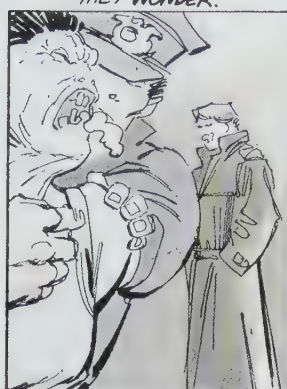
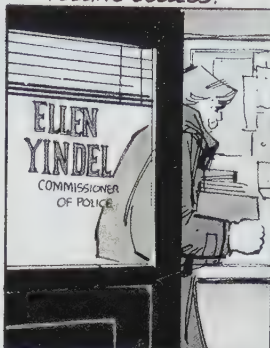
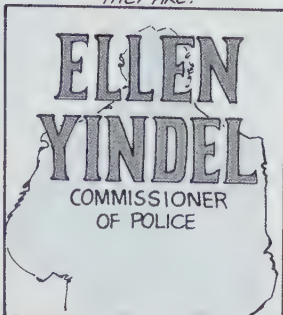
...THEY TELL ME I'M HANDLING IT WELL-- MY RETIREMENT, THAT IS-- THEY SMILE AND STARE AT ME, A LITTLE TOO OBVIOUS ABOUT HOW CURIOUS THEY ARE.

THEY WONDER HOW I CAN LEAVE IT BEHIND WITHOUT AT LEAST A MONTH OR TWO OF FEELING USELESS.

FIFTY YEARS OF THIS AND THEY WONDER.



SEEMS EVERYBODY WANTS TO KNOW WHAT IT IS.

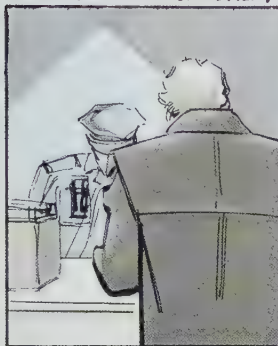


LIFE WILL BE EASIER NOW. I WON'T FEEL LIKE DAD TO AN ENTIRE CITY OF SOULS. I WON'T BLEED WITH EVERY SINGLE ONE OF MY CHILDREN.

WHEN I THINK OF BRUCE--AND WHAT HE'S IN FOR... I DON'T THINK HE CAN POSSIBLY KNOW HOW MUCH I BENT AND BROKE THE RULES FOR HIM, ALL THESE YEARS...

...WHEN I THINK OF BRUCE-- THEN, I WISH THEY HADN'T RETIRED ME. HE'S FINISHED. AND THERE'S NO WAY TO TELL HIM THAT.

I WON'T BE SEEING HIM AGAIN. I MEAN, SURE, I'LL SEE HIM-- HE'S THAT CLOSE TO POLITE. BUT I'M OUT OF THE PICTURE NOW. OUT OF HIS PICTURE.



AND NO POINT, I GUESS.

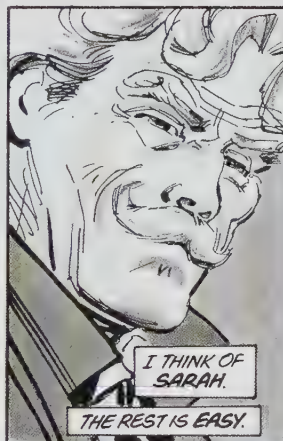


I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU MY SECRET. THE ONE I'LL TELL NOBODY AT THE BANQUET--



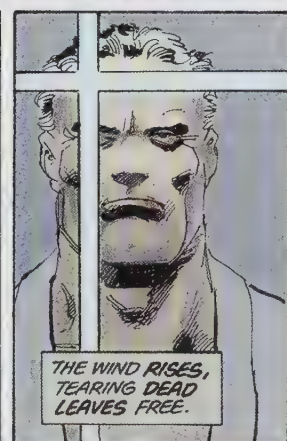
--GOD, WHAT WILL I SAY AT THE BANQUET?--

--IT'S A SIMPLE SECRET.

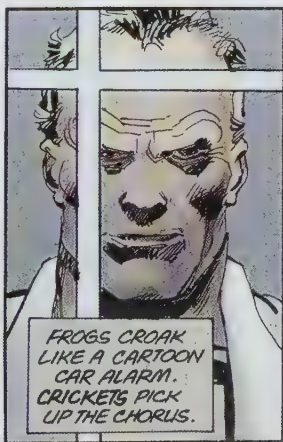
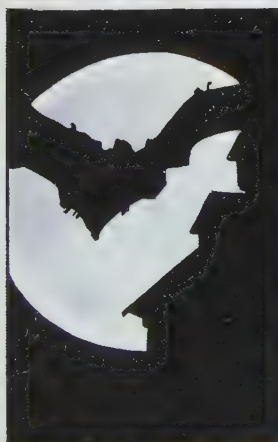


I THINK OF SARAH.

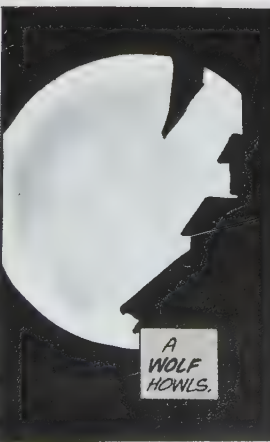
THE REST IS EASY.



THE WIND RISES, TEARING DEAD LEAVES FREE.



FROGS CROAK LIKE A CARTOON CAR ALARM. CRICKETS PICK UP THE CHORUS.



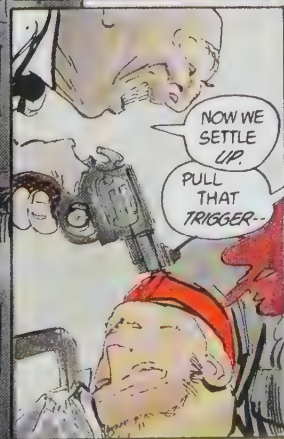
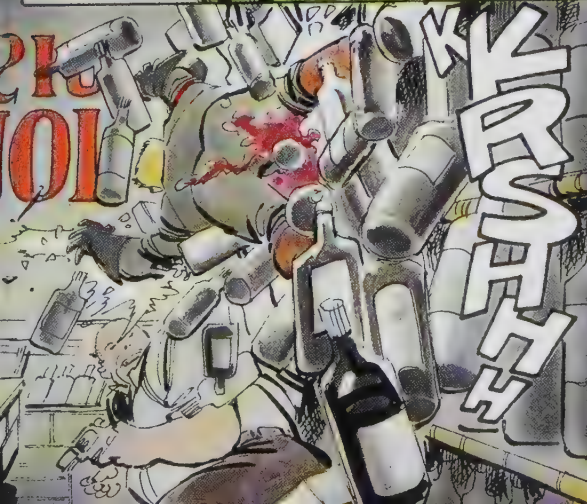
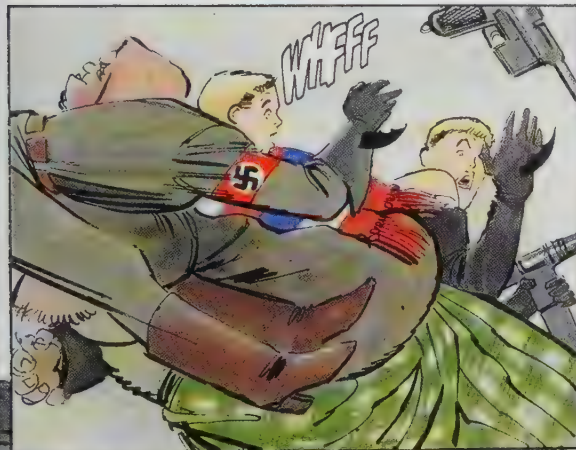
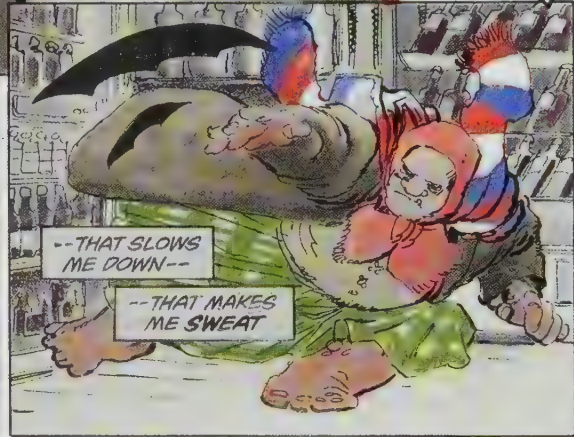
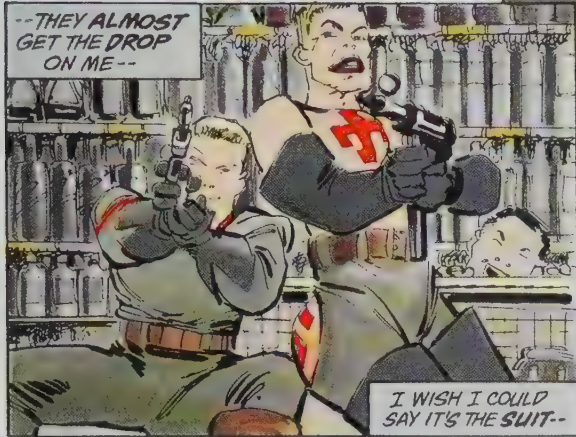
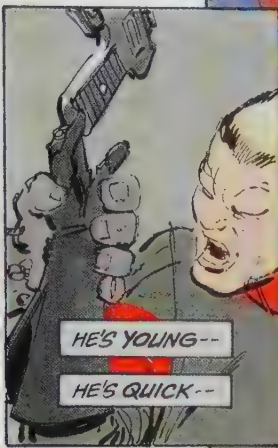
A WOLF HOWLS.



I KNOW HOW HE FEELS.









BRUNO IS COMING YOUR WAY, ROBIN.

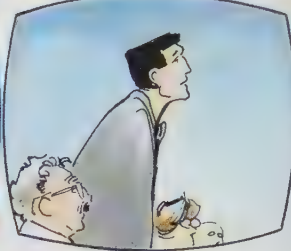
GET HER INTO THE ALLEY. DO NOT LET HER SEE YOU.

WELL, I DON'T THINK THAT'S MY BULL TO -- MY ROW TO HOE, BOYS... HEH... YOU SEE, THAT'S A RIGHT BIG STATE, ALL ITS OWN... AND IT'S GOT ITS OWN SOLID, CLEAR-HEADED GOVERNOR, YES, IT DOES...

SORRY, GUYS, I'M THE GOVERNOR. GOT A WHOLE STATE TO LOOK AFTER. I TRUST THE JUDGMENT OF THE MAYOR OF GOTHAM CITY IMPLICITLY.

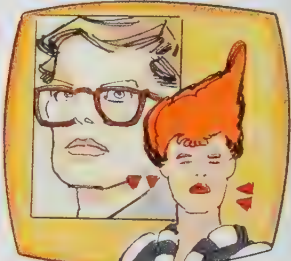
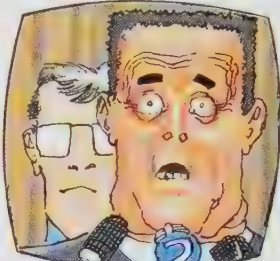
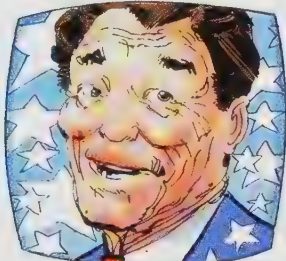
BOYS, BOYS, BOYS... ONE AT A TIME NOW... NOW HOW ABOUT THAT SMARTLY DRESSED YOUNGSTER IN THE FRONT ROW THERE...

MR. PRESIDENT-- WE'RE ALL ANXIOUS TO HEAR YOUR PLANS FOR THE CORTO MALTESE CRISIS. BUT FIRST, ANOTHER QUESTION MUCH ON THE MINDS OF AMERICA. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE BATMAN CONTROVERSY?



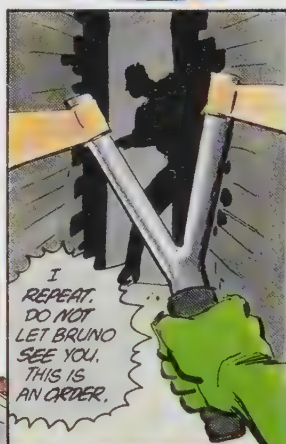
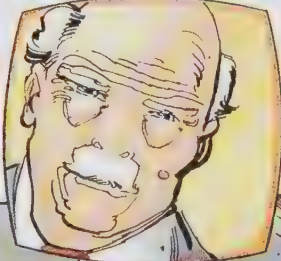
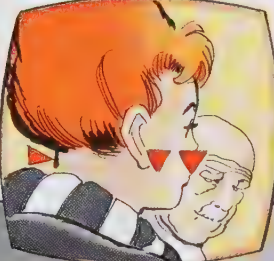
AS MAYOR, IT IS MY DUTY TO ADMINISTER-- NOT TO RENDER MORAL JUDGMENTS. DON'T ASK ME TO INTERFERE WITH THE DECISION-MAKING POWER OF OUR NEW POLICE COMMISSIONER.

AND SO THE BATMAN BUCK IS PASSED-- TO ELLEN YINDEL, WHO REPLACES JAMES GORDON AS POLICE COMMISSIONER TONIGHT. WILL SHE FULFILL HER PROMISE TO ISSUE AN ARREST WARRANT FOR THE BATMAN?

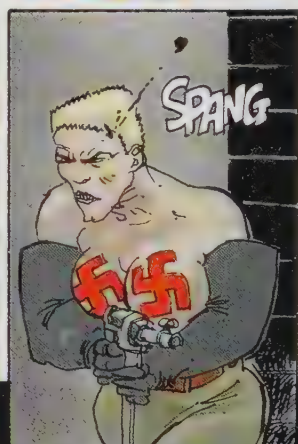


CHANNEL TWO WILL BROADCAST THE BANQUET LIVE; GORDON IS SCHEDULED TO INTRODUCE YINDEL-- A GRACEFUL GESTURE, CONSIDERING THEIR DIFFERENCES. WE MAY SEE SOME SPARKS FLY. TDM?

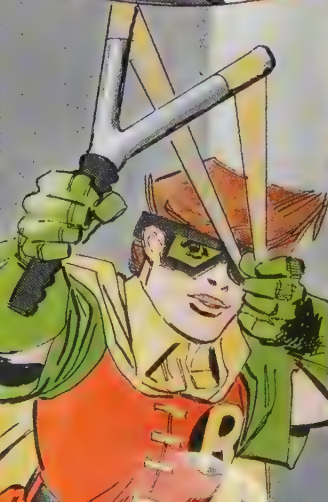
THAT WE MAY, LOLA. WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK, AS JULIE PARKS BRINGS US A STORY WE DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO CLASSIFY AS AN ATMOSPHERE ANOMALY-- OR A UFO SIGHTING.



I REPEAT. DO NOT LET BRUNO SEE YOU. THIS IS AN ORDER.



SPANG



SPUDS

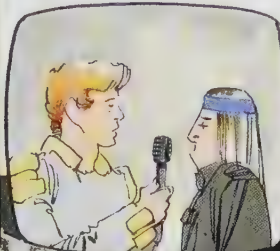


BRAPP



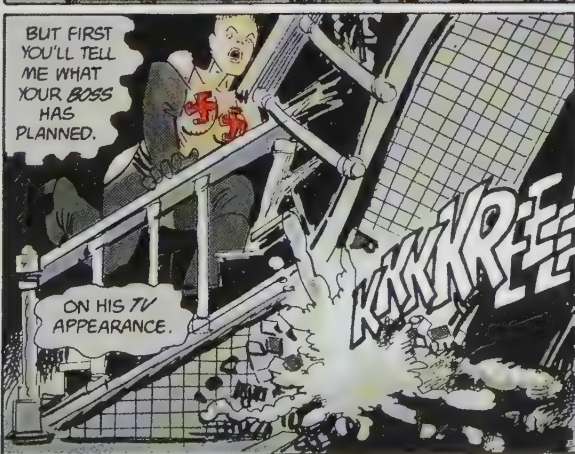
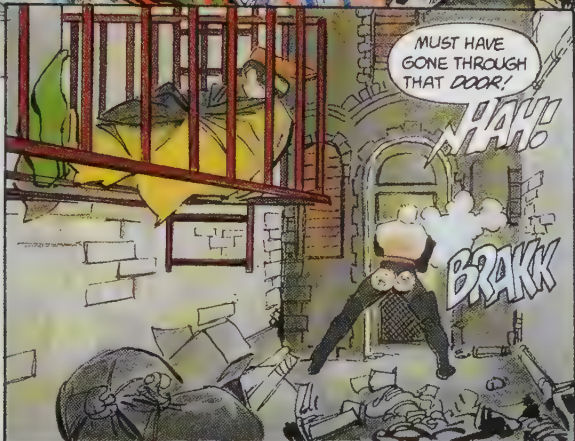
TOM, SUNFLOWER STANDISH HAS OPERATED HIS CORNER NEWSSTAND FOR FIFTEEN YEARS. HE'S NEVER SEEN THE LIKE OF WHAT STRUCK SEVENTH AVENUE THIS EVENING. HAVE YOU, MR. STANDISH?

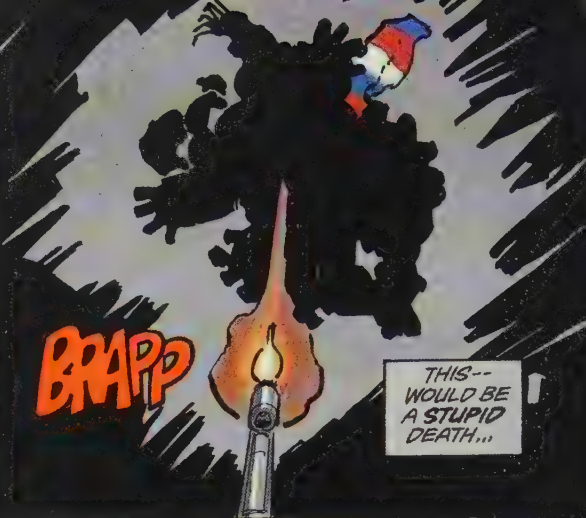
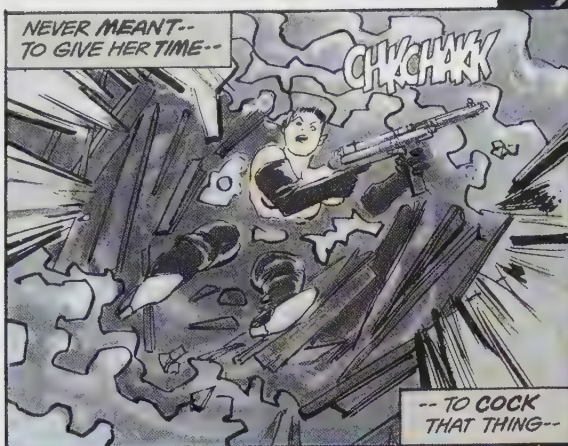
NOT WITHOUT ACID. I MEAN, NO -- I DIDN'T SEE IT. MY MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS -- THEN I SAW, BLOWING LIKE LEAVES. BUT I DIDN'T SEE IT. IT WAS TOO FAST -- IT WAS FASTER THAN ANYTHING.



FASTER THAN A SPEEDING--

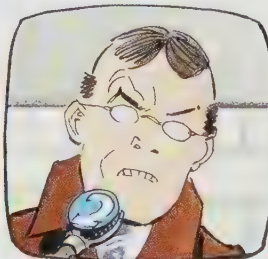
CAREFUL NOW, LOLA.



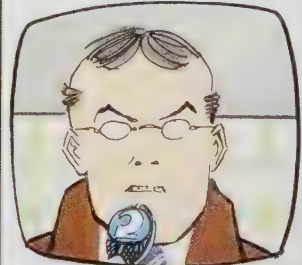


ANOTHER BIZARRE
INCIDENT--THIS ONE IN THE
SOUTH STREET SUBWAY
STATION. ADVERTISING AGENT
BYRON BRASSBALLS TOLD
REPORTERS...

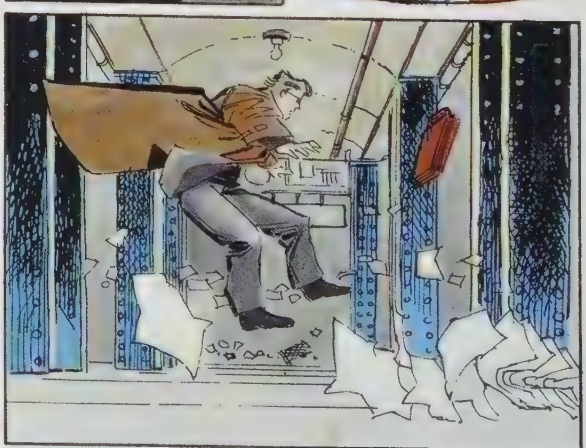
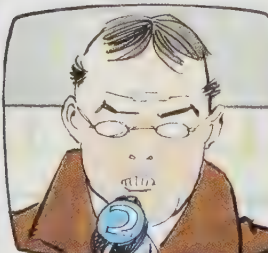
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING
WRONGS. I WAS JUST TRYING
TO PROTECT MYSELF. THE
SUBWAYS ARE DANGEROUS.
YOU DON'T NEED ME TO TELL
YOU THAT. SO THERE I WAS,
ALONE IN THE STATION EXCEPT
FOR THIS "BEGGAR"--I WANT
THAT IN QUOTES--

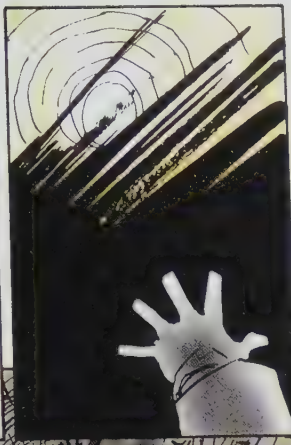


--WHAT?...HOW WAS I TO KNOW
HE DIDN'T HAVE A GUN? THEY
NEVER SHOW YOU THAT UNTIL
THEY'RE READY TO KILL YOU--
WHAT?...OH, SURE. THE
CRUTCHES. A LOT OF THEM
USE CRUTCHES. YOU KNOW
WHAT I MEAN.



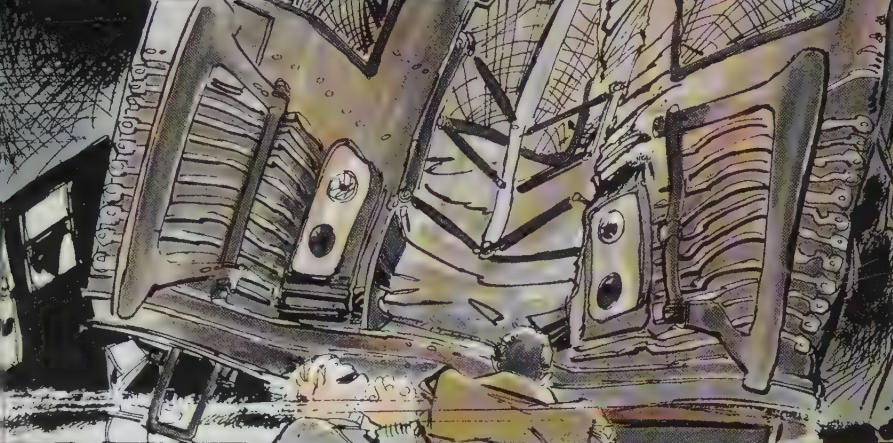
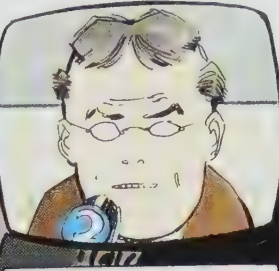
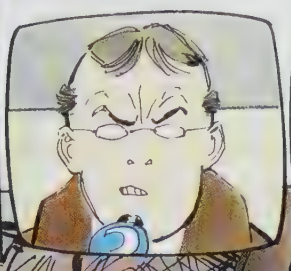
HEY-- HE STARTED IT. AND IT
WAS HIS CRUTCHES THAT
TRIPPED HIM UP, BASE--
WHAT?...YOU BET HE YELLED.
WANTED ME TO JUMP DOWN AND
DIE WITH HIM. OF COURSE I RAN.
WHO WOULDN'T? THEN SOME-
THING HIT ME HARD--IN THE
CHEST--





--HAVEN'T SEEN A DOCTOR YET, BUT I'M SURE I SLIPPED A DYSC LANDING ON THE TRACKS... NO, I COULDN'T SEE. NOT A FRIGGING THING. THAT WIND KICKED UP TOO MUCH SOOT. SPENT A SECOND LISTENING TO THAT BEGGAR PRAY LIKE AN IDIOT...

...YES, I AM RELIGIOUS. BUT I'VE GOT THE DECENCY TO KEEP IT IN CHURCH. THEN I HEARD THE SCREAM OF TWISTING METAL-- SHOUTS FROM INSIDE THE TRAIN, PEOPLE BITCHING. FINALLY THE SOOT SETTLED...

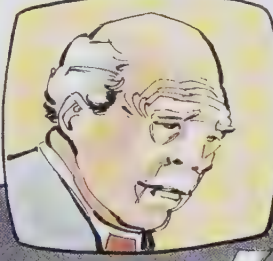


...AND THERE IT WAS-- THE TRAIN, I MEAN--ITS FRONT END CRUSHED INWARD, LIKE IT RAN INTO SOMETHING... WELL, SOMETHING...



SOMETHING MORE POWERFUL THAN A LOCOMOTIVE, RIGHT, TOM?

LOLA--THE LAST THING WE NEED IS TROUBLE WITH THE F.C.C. ...



SOFTENING UP -- SHE'LL START TALKING SOON--

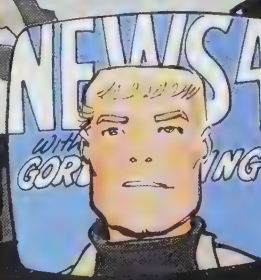
--WHAT'S THAT SOUND--

--THE FLOOR--

--IT'S SHAKING--



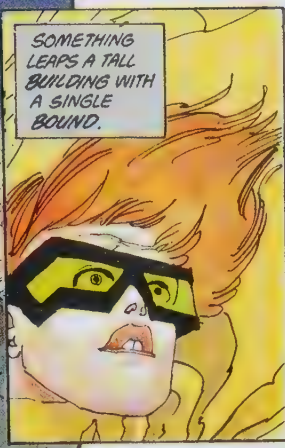
--NOT AN EARTHQUAKE. DO NOT PANIC. WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S LOCALIZED-- AND MOVING ACROSS GOTHAM'S SOUTH SIDE...



RRRRRRRRMMMMBBBBB



SOMETHING
HURLS ITSELF
INTO THE SKY.



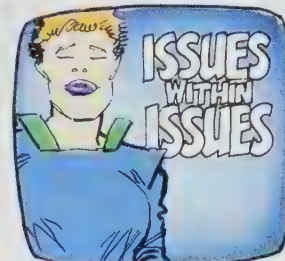
SOMETHING
LEAPS A TALL
BUILDING WITH
A SINGLE
BOUND.

...SOVIET REPRESENTATIVES
STORMED OUT OF THE HALL,
REPEATING THIS LATE-
BREAKING STORY--U.S./SOVIET
TALKS ON THE CORTO
MALTESE CRISIS HAVE
BROKEN DOWN.

TERMINING U.S. MILITARY
SUPPORT OF THE REGIME OF
GENERAL MONTALBAN AS
"FASCIST AGGRESSION," THE
SOVIETS PLEDGED A "TOTAL
MILITARY COMMITMENT." THIS
HAS BEEN A NEWS SIX SPECIAL
REPORT.

...BODIES OF A PUSHER AND
JUNKIE FOUND HACKED TO
PIECES IN A WEST END
TENEMENT. MEMBERS OF THE
DISBANDED MUTANT GANG ARE
CARRYING OUT THEIR THREAT TO
GOTHAM'S UNDERWORLD.

THE MUTANTS ARE DEAD. THE
MUTANTS ARE HISTORY. THIS
IS THE MARK OF THE FUTURE.
GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO
THE BATMAN.

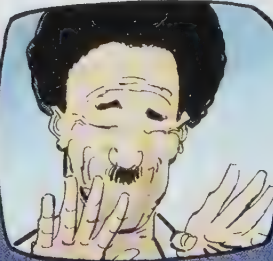


DO NOT EXPECT ANY
FURTHER STATEMENTS. THE
SONS OF THE BATMAN DO
NOT TALK. WE ACT. LET
GOTHAM'S CRIMINALS
BEWARE. THEY ARE ABOUT
TO ENTER HELL.

BATMAN'S CULPABILITY
FOR THIS ATROCITY IS OUR
SUBJECT TONIGHT. WITH
US IS THE WORLD'S LEADING
EXPERT ON THE SOCIOLOGICAL
IMPACT OF THE BATMAN--
DR. BARTHOLOMEW WOLPER.

BATMAN
IS A
MENACE
TO
SOCIETY.

NOW, I KNOW THAT'S SOMETHING
OF AN OUTDATED TERM. SURE
SOUNDS STRANGE, COMING
OUT OF MY MOUTH. NONETHELESS
IT APPLIES, DESPITE MY ALERTING
THE CITY TO THE INEVITABLE
CONSEQUENCES--



--NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE
TO STOP THIS PSYCHOSOCIAL
INFECTION. BATMAN SHOULD
BE CONSIDERED PERSONALLY
RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY
HUMAN BEING MURDERED
BY THIS GANG.

MY ORDERS
WERE SPECIFIC--
WATCH
IT--
YEAH,
BUT...







-- STILL, YOU MADE YOURSELF *VISIBLE* TO BRUNO. I WILL NOT TOLERATE *INSUBORDINATION* --

-- CAREFUL --

... BUT BACK THERE -- WAS THAT HIM?

... THE HALL IS SILENT, AS THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN *POLICE COMMISSIONER* OF GOTHAM CITY FOR TWENTY-SIX YEARS STEPS TO THE PODIUM...

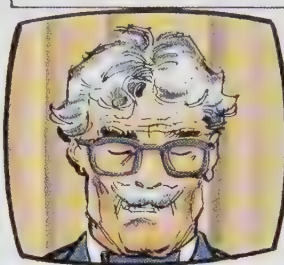
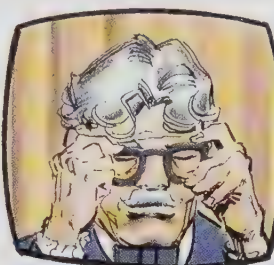


NICE WATCH.

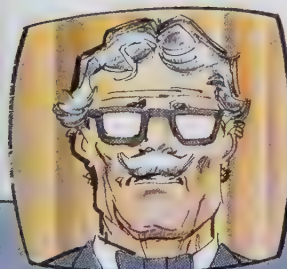
... JAMES GORDON DRAWS A FOND CHUCKLE FROM THE AUDIENCE...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... IT IS MY PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO YOUR NEW *POLICE COMMISSIONER*. I DO NOT ENVY HER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. THE JOB HAS FEW REWARDS.

THE BEST YOU CAN HOPE FOR IS THAT WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED WITH IT, THINGS AREN'T AS LOUSY AS THEY WOULD'VE BEEN WITHOUT YOU. ELLEN YINDEL IS EMINENTLY QUALIFIED FOR THIS JOB...



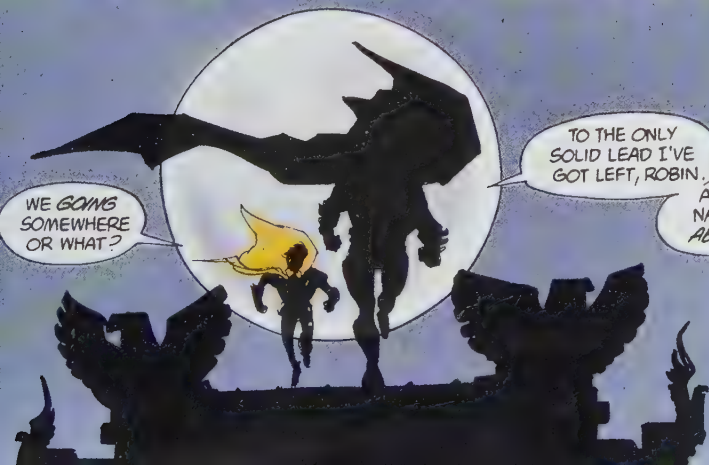
TO ATTEMPT TO QUOTE HER OUTSTANDING RECORD IN THE MINUTES I'M ALLOWED WOULD BE A DISSERVICE TO HER. RATHER, I OFFER MY SYMPATHY, IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT SHE FACES.



IF YOU DISOBEY, EVER AGAIN--

-- YOU'RE FIRED.

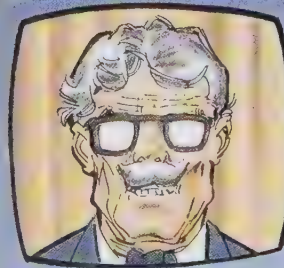
SHE FACES A CITY OF THIEVES AND MURDERERS AND HONEST PEOPLE TOO FRIGHTENED TO HOPE. SHE FACES LIFE-AND-DEATH DECISIONS, EVERY HOUR TO COME. SOME WILL TORTURE HER.



WE GOING SOMEWHERE OR WHAT?

TO THE ONLY SOLID LEAD I'VE GOT LEFT, ROBIN.

A MAN NAMED ABNER.

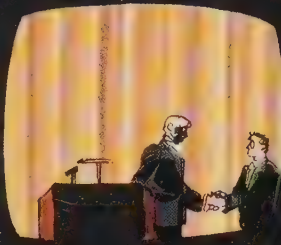
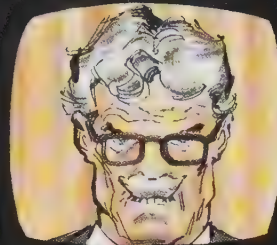


SHE WILL FACE A MAN WHO IS THE LIVING SPIRIT OF... SOMETHING WE NEED. SHE MAY BE HIS ENEMY. SHE MAY LEARN FROM HIM. I WISH HER WELL. THANK YOU-- AND GOOD-BYE.

... THERE IS STRAINED APPAUSE FOR JAMES GORDON...

FIGURE WE'VE BEEN DOING THE SPIDER HERE FOR LESS THAN THREE YEARS...

PATIENCE, ROBIN. IT'LL KEEP YOU ALIVE. ABNER ISN'T HOME.



ACES. I GET SOME CLUES.

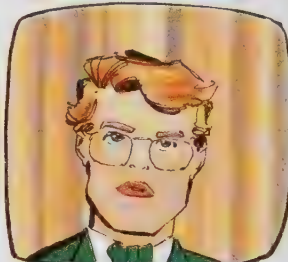
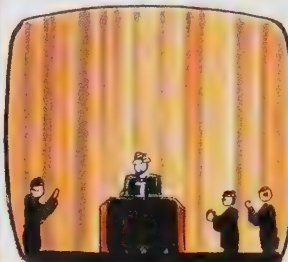


ROBIN!

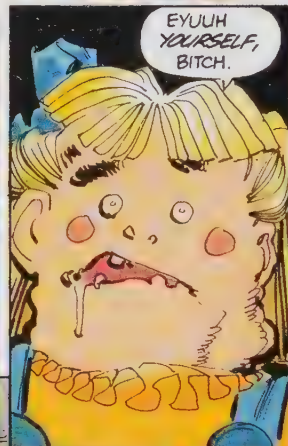
NO!

... AND YES-- A STANDING OVATION FOR POLICE COMMISSIONER YINDEL!

THANK YOU... I AM HONORED TO SHARE THE STAGE WITH JAMES GORDON. HE SPOKE OF DECISIONS. NOW I MUST MAKE MY OWN.



EYUUH.



EYUUH YOURSELF, BITCH.

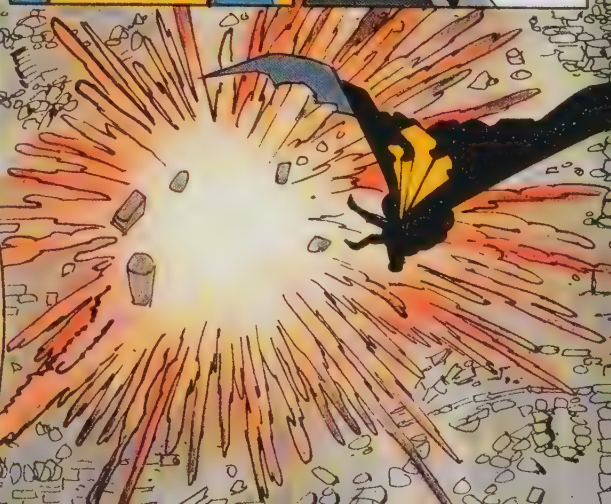


I SAID NO!

IT TALKS--

DESPITE GOTHAM'S PLAGUE OF CRIME, I BELIEVE OUR ONLY RECOURSE IS LAW ENFORCEMENT. I WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF A VIGILANTE. THEREFORE, AS YOUR POLICE COMMISSIONER--

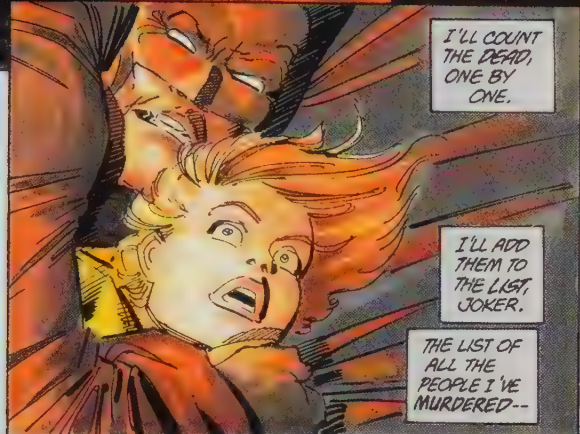
--I ISSUE THIS ARREST ORDER FOR THE BATMAN ON CHARGES OF BREAKING AND ENTERING, ASSAULT AND BATTERY, CREATING A PUBLIC MENACE--





I'LL SEND ROBIN HOME.

I'LL HELP THE EMERGENCY TEAMS AS BEST I CAN.



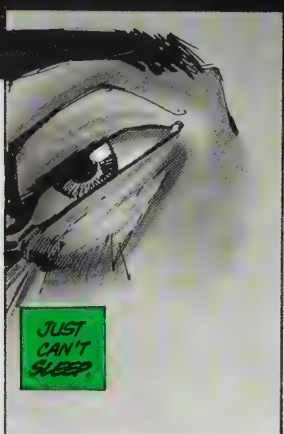
I'LL COUNT THE DEAD, ONE BY ONE.

I'LL ADD THEM TO THE LIST, JOKER.

THE LIST OF ALL THE PEOPLE I'VE MURDERED--



-- BY LETTING YOU LIVE.

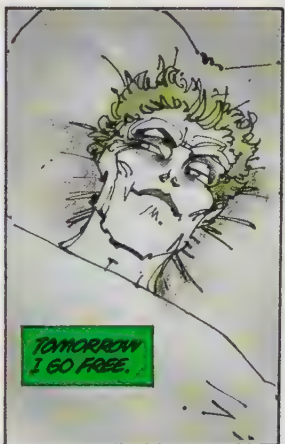


JUST CAN'T SLEEP



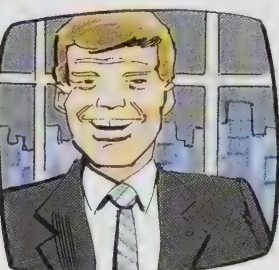
SHOULD SLEEP.

SHOULD BE FRESH TOMORROW.



TOMORROW I GO FREE.

FISTFUL OF ENTERTAINMENT TOMORROW NIGHT, WITH DR. RUTH WEISENHEIMER, THE WET HAMBURGER BUN CONTEST, AND A MAN WHO'S BROUGHT A LOT OF SMILES TO THE WORLD. GO TO BED.



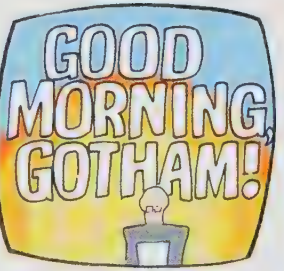
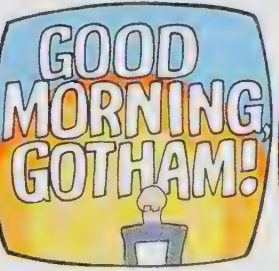
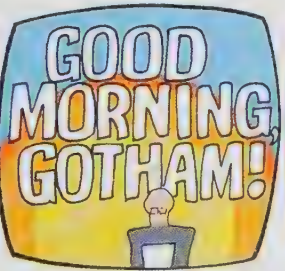
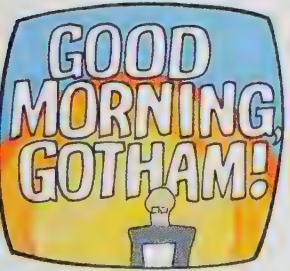
-- BUT I JUST CAN'T SLEEP.

...TWELVE KILLED IN A MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSION THAT LEVELLED A BAY RIDGE APARTMENT BUILDING ...THE RESCUE TEAM SIGHTED BATMAN AT THE SCENE...

...FOLLOWING HER ARREST ORDER FOR THE BATMAN, COMMISSIONER YINDEL FILED A FORMAL PROTEST WITH THE MEDIA COUNCIL AGAINST THE JOKER'S APPEARANCE ON THE DAVID ENDOCHRINE SHOW...

THE COUNCIL DENIED HER PROTEST...THE BODY OF THREE-TIME LOSER HECTOR MENDEZ WAS FOUND IN AN EAST SIDE ALLEY. HE HAD BEEN LITERALLY SKINNED ALIVE...

...THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES BUILD HAS DECLARED A GENERAL STRIKE, IN RESPONSE TO TREATMENT OF THEIR MEMBERS IN THE RECENT LIBYAN INCIDENT...



...DESPITE MASSIVE SOVIET
ARMS BUILDUP IN THE
WATERS SURROUNDING
CORTO MALTESE, THE
PRESIDENT PROMISES THAT
AMERICA WILL NOT BE THE
FIRST TO DEPLOY NUCLEAR
WEAPONS...

**GOOD
MORNING
GOTHAM!**



THERE'S JUST
THE SUN AND THE
SKY AND HIM,
LIKE HE'S THE ONLY
REASON IT'S ALL HERE.

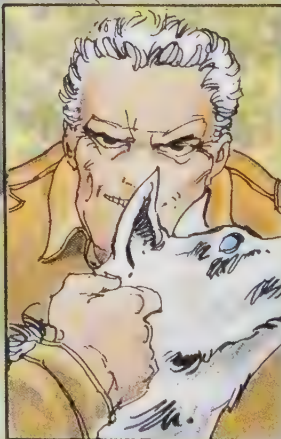
THEN HE RUINS
EVERYTHING BY
TALKING.

YOU'RE NOT A
YOUNG MAN
ANYMORE,
BRUCE...

MAYBE
IF YOU'D
LEARNED
TO SLOW
DOWN...
FIND
YOUR
NICHE...

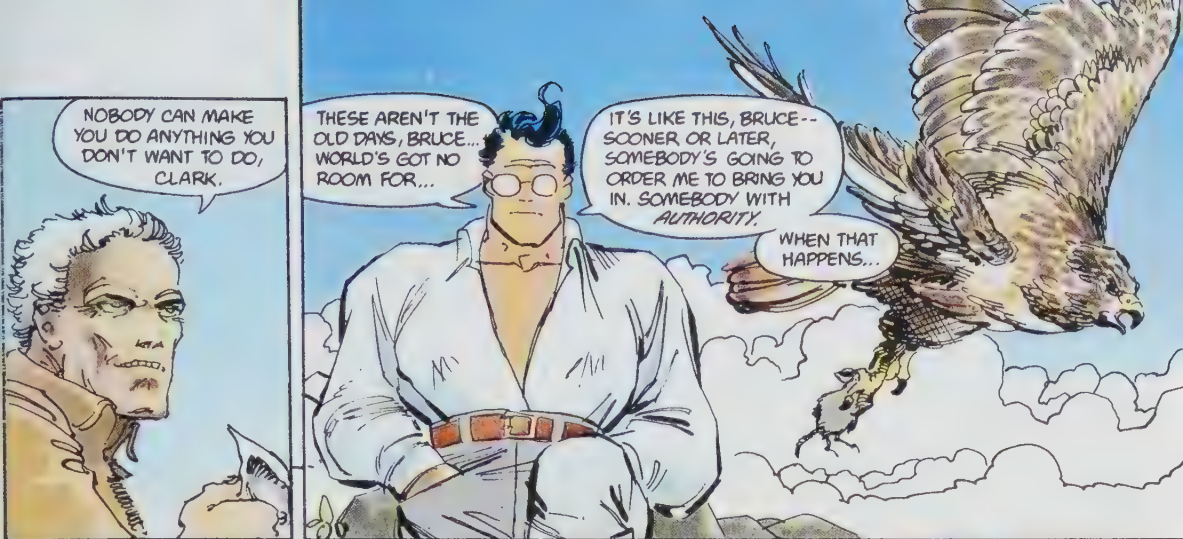
...BUT TIMES
HAVE CHANGED
AND YOU--

WELL, IT'S
JUST NOT
HEALTHY.
YOU'LL BURN
YOURSELF
UP.



I KNOW, I
KNOW, YOU
LOOK BETTER
THAN YOU HAVE
IN YEARS.
BUT...

YOU'RE
GOING TO
MAKE ME
COME RIGHT
OUT AND SAY
IT, AREN'T YOU?



NOBODY CAN MAKE YOU DO ANYTHING YOU DON'T WANT TO DO, CLARK.

THESE AREN'T THE OLD DAYS, BRUCE... WORLD'S GOT NO ROOM FOR...

IT'S LIKE THIS, BRUCE-- SOONER OR LATER, SOMEBODY'S GOING TO ORDER ME TO BRING YOU IN. SOMEBODY WITH AUTHORITY.

WHEN THAT HAPPENS...

WHEN THAT HAPPENS, CLARK-- MAY THE BEST MAN WIN.

NOW THAT'S JUST-- --HOLD ON A SECOND--

...AMERICAN TR-- EXCUSE ME... HEROIC AMERICAN TROOPS ARE NOW ENGAGED IN DIRECT COMBAT WITH SOVIET FORCES... NOW, THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF LOOSE TALK THESE DAYS ABOUT NUCLEAR WAR...

I HAVE TO LEAVE.

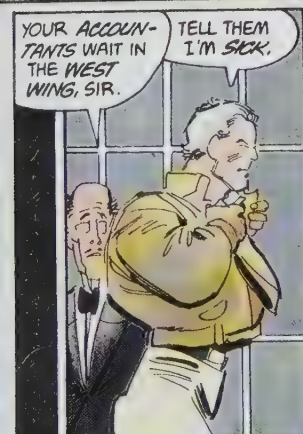
WE'LL TALK LATER.



NO HURRY.

... WELL, LET ME TELL YOU NOBODY'S RUNNING OFF HALF- COCKED, NO SIR... BUT WE SURE AS SHOOTIN' AREN'T RUNNING AWAY, EITHER. WE'VE GOT TO SECURE OUR-- AH-- STAND UP FOR THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM...

... AND THOSE CUTE LITTLE CORTO MALTESE PEOPLE, THEY WANT US THERE, JUST YOU ASK THEM... MEANWHILE, DON'T YOU FRET... WE'VE GOT GOD ON OUR SIDE... OR THE NEXT BEST THING, ANYWAY... HEH...



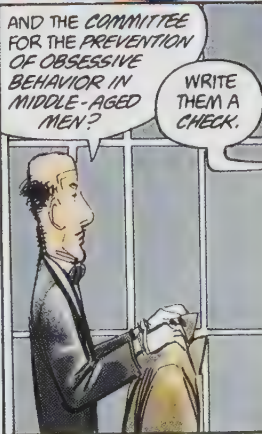
YOUR ACCOUNTANTS WAIT IN THE WEST WING, SIR.

TELL THEM I'M SICK.



SHAN'T HAVE TO LIE. THAT REFUGEE CHARITY CALLED...

WRITE THEM A CHECK.



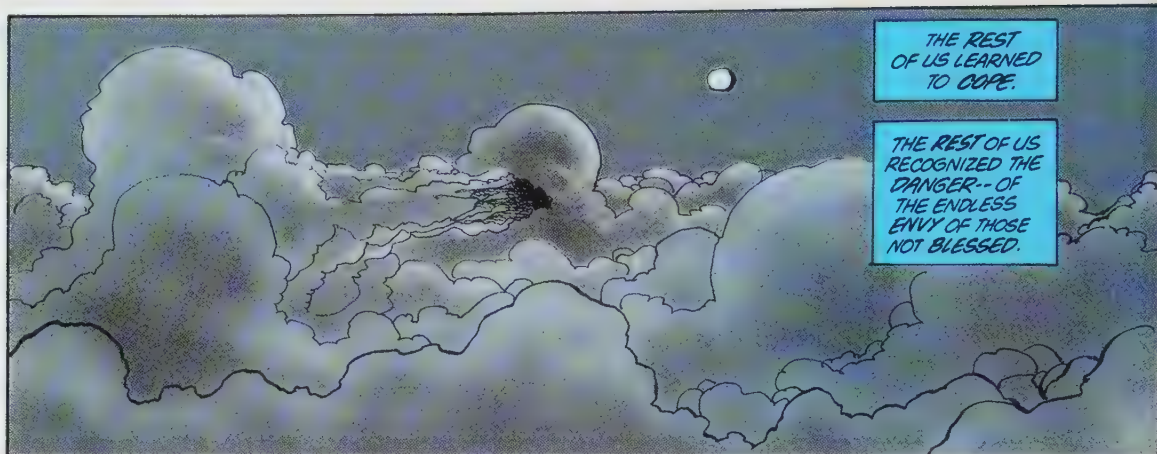
AND THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PREVENTION OF OBSSIVE BEHAVIOR IN MIDDLE- AGED MEN?

WRITE THEM A CHECK.



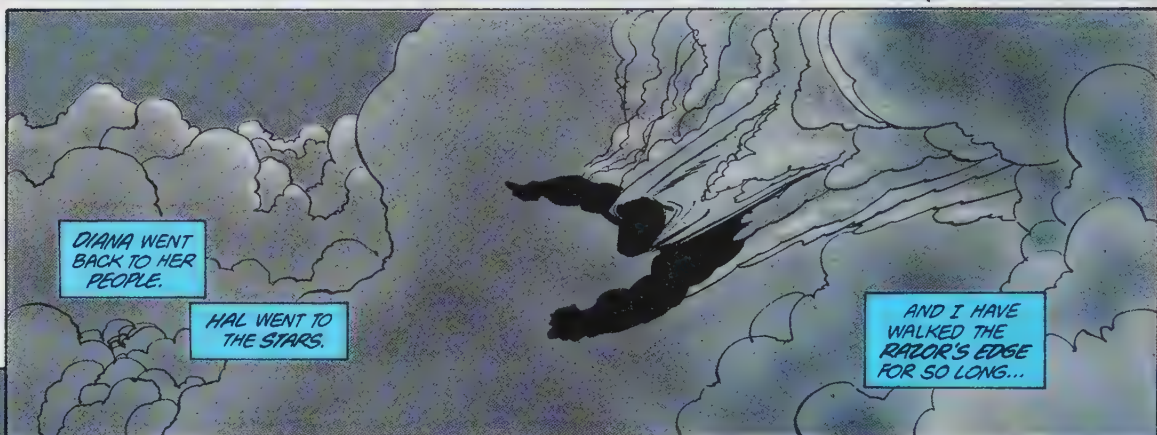
VERY GOOD, SIR.

YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR IS KEEN AS EVER, SIR.



THE REST
OF US LEARNED
TO COPE.

THE REST OF US
RECOGNIZED THE
DANGER-- OF
THE ENDLESS
ENVY OF THOSE
NOT BLESSED.



DIANA WENT
BACK TO HER
PEOPLE.

HAL WENT TO
THE STARS.

AND I HAVE
WALKED THE
RAZOR'S EDGE
FOR SO LONG...



BUT YOU,
BRUCE--

-- YOU, WITH
YOUR WILD
OBSESSION--



--SEVEN POINT FIVE
ON THE RICHTER SCALE...
HAVE THOSE IDIOTS
FINALLY DONE IT?...

CORTO
MALTESE

THIS IS STRICTLY AN
OBSERVATION MISSION FOR
YOU, ROBIN. YOU WILL STAY
IN THE COPTER.

YOU ARE NOT TO
TOUCH THE
CONTROLS.

IF ANYTHING
GOES WRONG,
JUST SAY
"BOOSTERS" INTO
THE MIKE.

IT'S VOICE
ACTIVATED
COMPUTERS. YOU
WOULDN'T
UNDERSTAND.

FIGURE I
WOULDN'T

SIT UP
STRAIGHT,
ROBIN.

YES,
SIR. SENSORS READ EIGHT
POLICE CHOPPERS IN THE
VICINITY OF THE TV
STUDIO.

YINDEL'S SERIOUS ABOUT THAT
ARREST ORDER. BUT I THINK
SHE'S IN FOR A SURPRISE
WHEN SHE SICS POLICE ON
ME. THEY'LL SEE US SOON...

THIS THING
PACK A
CLOAK?

...YES.
HOW'D YOU
KNOW
ABOUT...

OLD
NEWS,
BOSS.

HAVE WE GOT
A LUNGBUSTER
OF A SHOW
FOR YOU
TONIGHT...

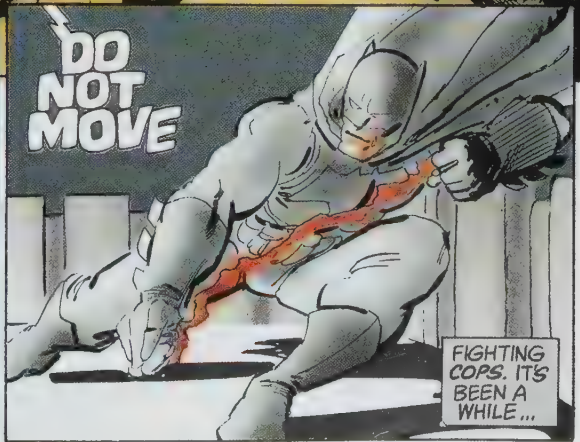
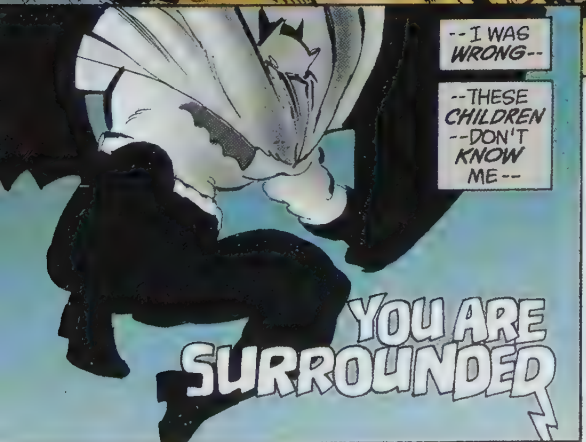
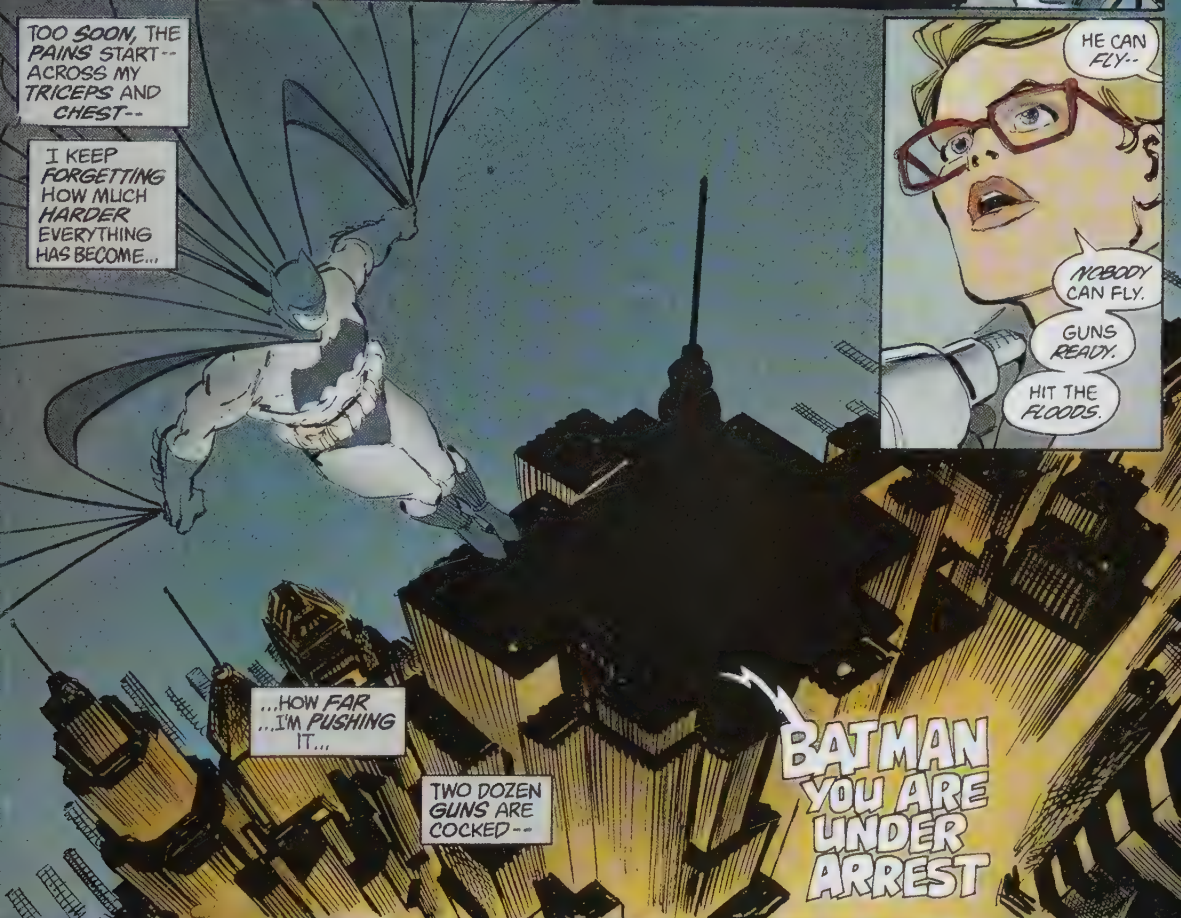
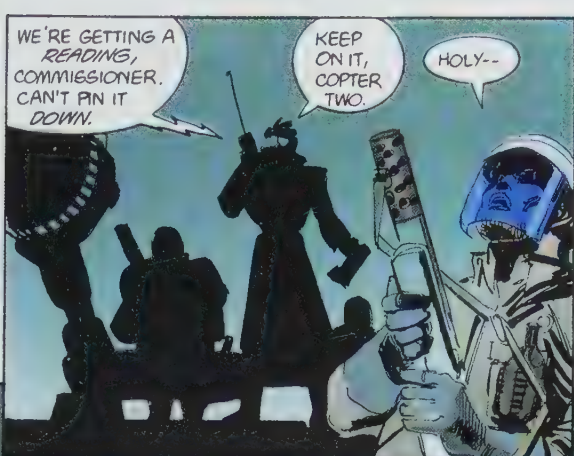
JUST BE
YOURSELF...

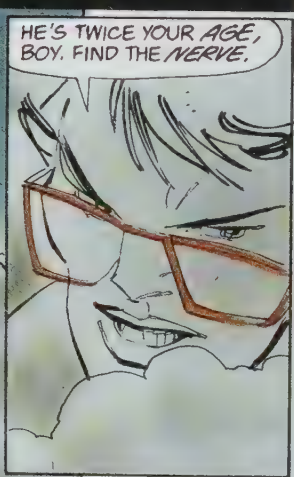
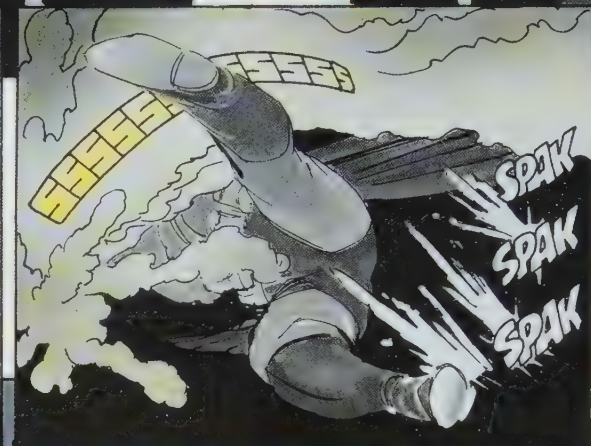
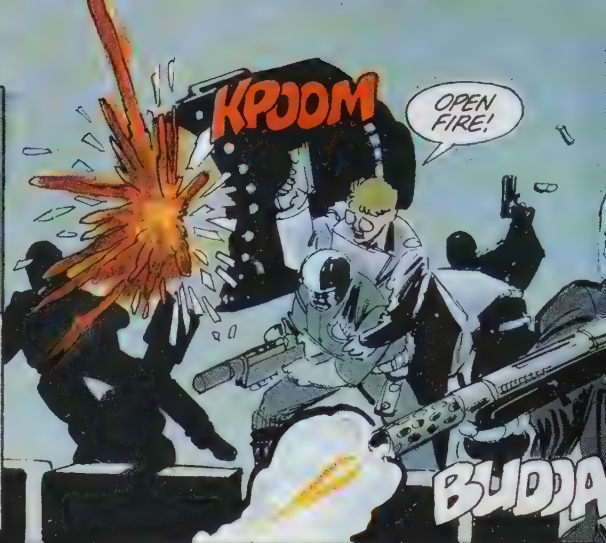
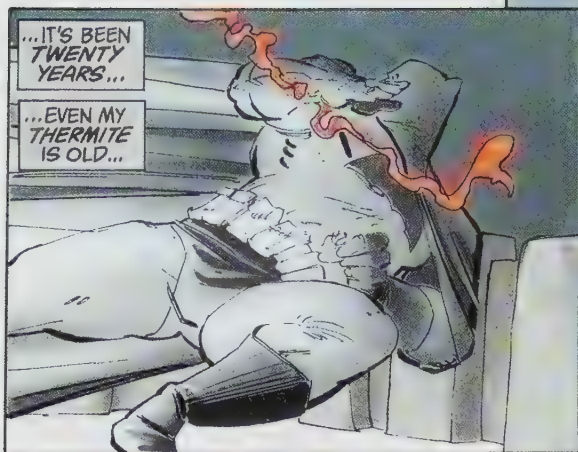
...PEOPLE ZHOULD
HAF ZEX UND ZEX
UND ZEX-- ALL ZE
TIME, DAVID...

YOUR SISTER MARY
DID REAL GOOD FOR
UNCLE JOKER, BOBBIE.
YOU WILL TOO, WON'T
YOU?

GO SCREW,
FAT BOY--

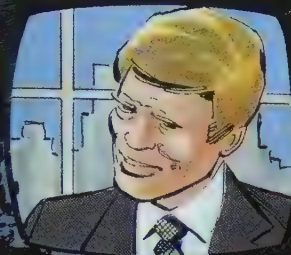
GOD DAMN
MILK
BABY!





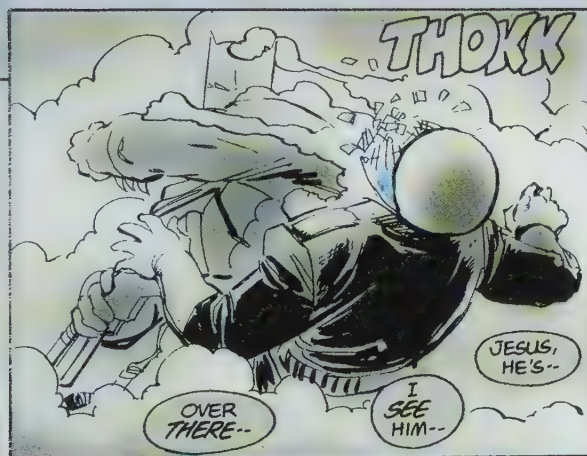
WHAT CAN I SAY
ABOUT OUR NEXT
GUEST THAT HASN'T
BEEN SAID BEFORE?
PAUL?

HE'S A KOOK, DAVE.
A MANIAC. A REAL
LUNATIC. NO, I
MEAN IT. HE'S A
NUT.



SO MANY
FACES--SO
DIFFERENT
FROM ONE
ANOTHER...

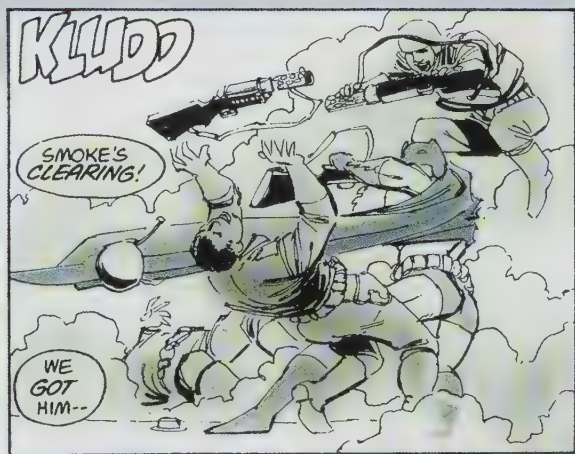
...SO FEW
SMILES...



OVER
THERE--

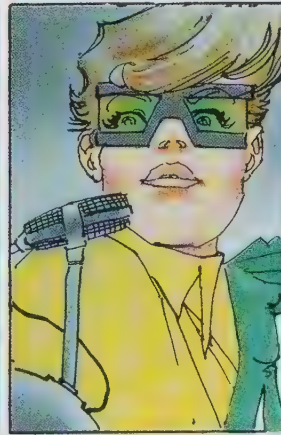
I
SEE
HIM--

JESUS,
HE'S--



SMOKE'S
CLEARING!

WE
GOT
HIM--

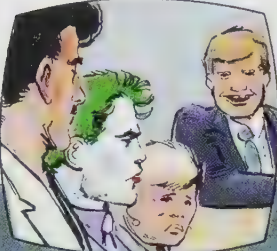


TK
TK
TK
TK
TK
TK
TK

YOU'RE SAID TO HAVE ONLY KILLED ABOUT SIX HUNDRED PEOPLE, JOKER. NOW DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, BUT I THINK YOU'VE BEEN HOLDING OUT ON US.

THIS IS A SENSITIVE HUMAN BEING HERE, DAVE. I WON'T LET YOU HARASS--

I DON'T KEEP COUNT.



I'M GOING TO KILL EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM.

NOW THAT'S DARN RUDE.

CAN'T BELIEVE IT--



--I'M ALREADY BREATHING HARD--

HE... AH... HE'S JUST... AH... TRYING TO BREAK THE TENSION...

HEM: DR. VOLPER-- YOU HAF BLENNED ZE BATMAN FOR ZESE KILLINGS, YES?

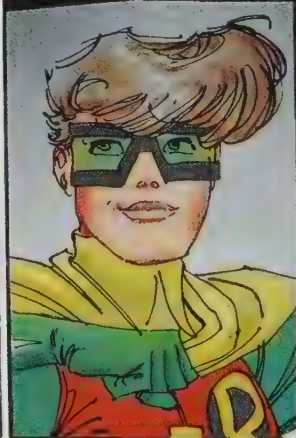
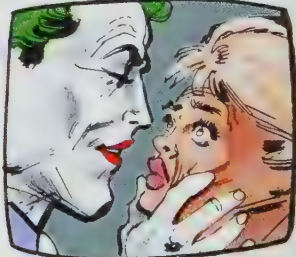
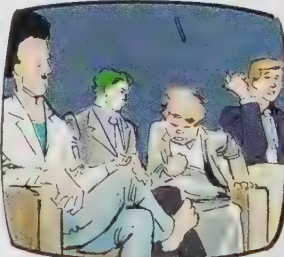
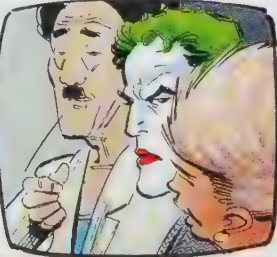
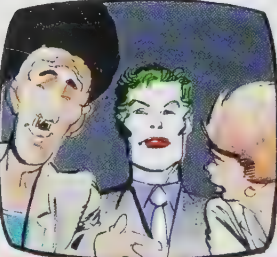
YES. YES. MY PATIENT IS A VICTIM OF BATMAN'S PSYCHOSIS.

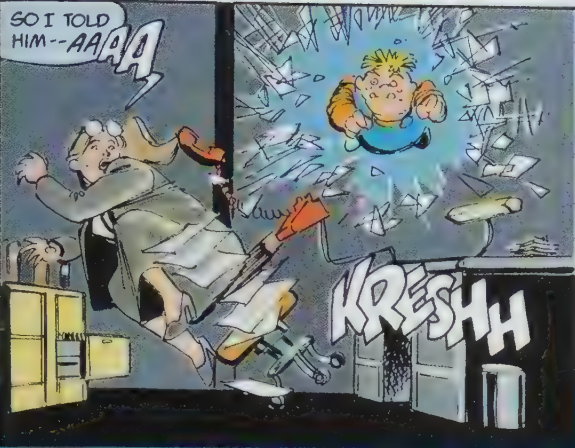
UND WHAT IZ ZE NATURE UF BATMAN'S PSYCHOSIS?

WHY, SEXUAL REPRESSION, OF COURSE.

SEXUAL REPRESSION --ZIS IS A TERRIBLE ZING...

YOU'RE RIGHT. WE MUST NOT RESTRAIN OURSELVES.



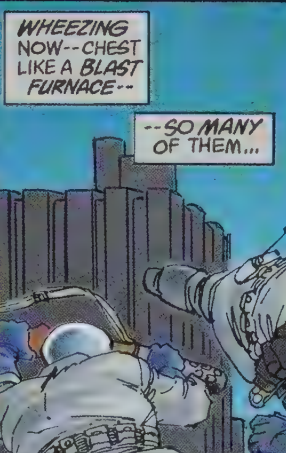


SO I TOLD HIM--AAA

KRESHH



BILLY IN CLOSE.

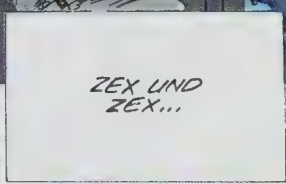


WHEEZING NOW--CHEST LIKE A BLAST FURNACE--

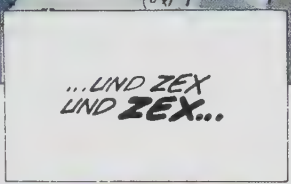
--SO MANY OF THEM...



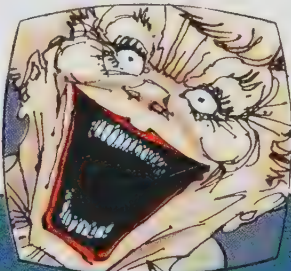
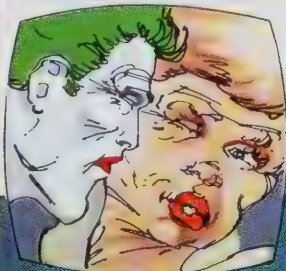
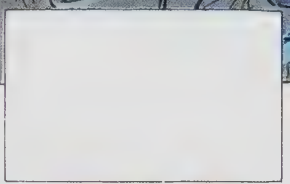
A SENSITIVE HUMAN BEING.



ZEX LIND ZEX...

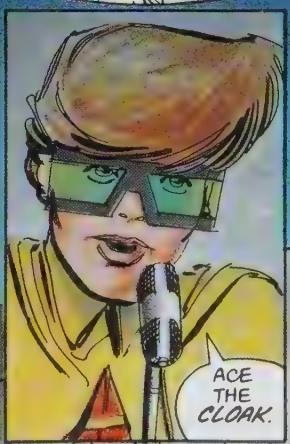


...LIND ZEX LIND ZEX...

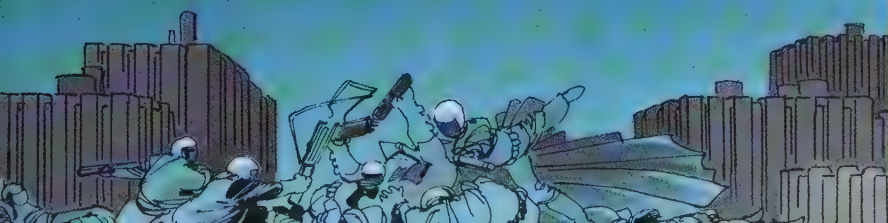


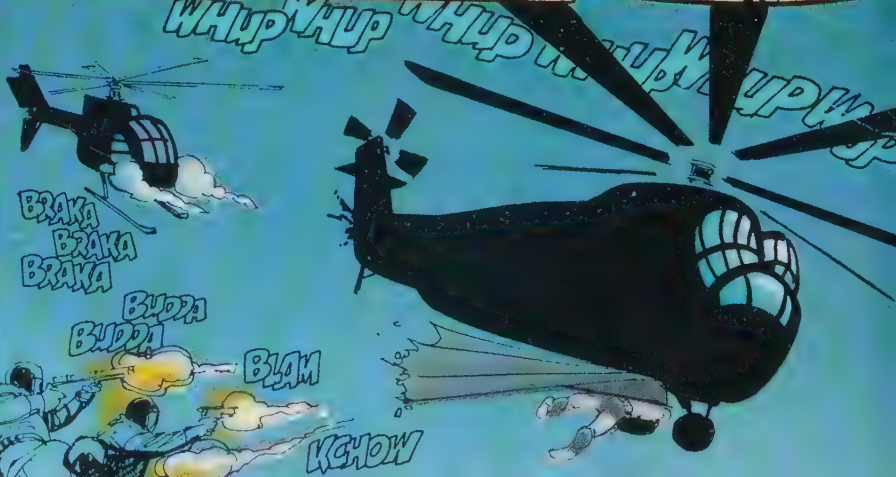
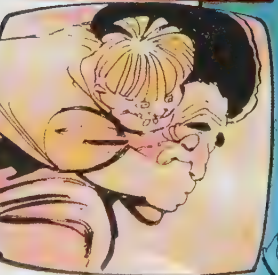
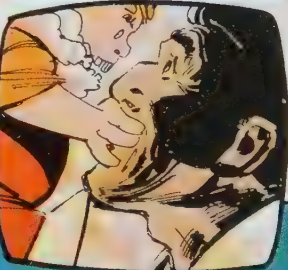
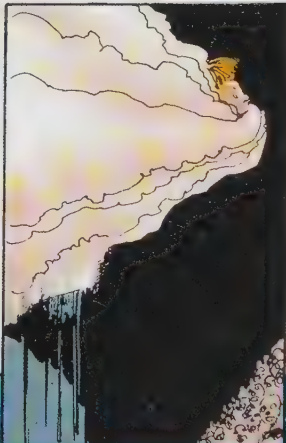
...SO MANY... AND THEY'RE ALL...

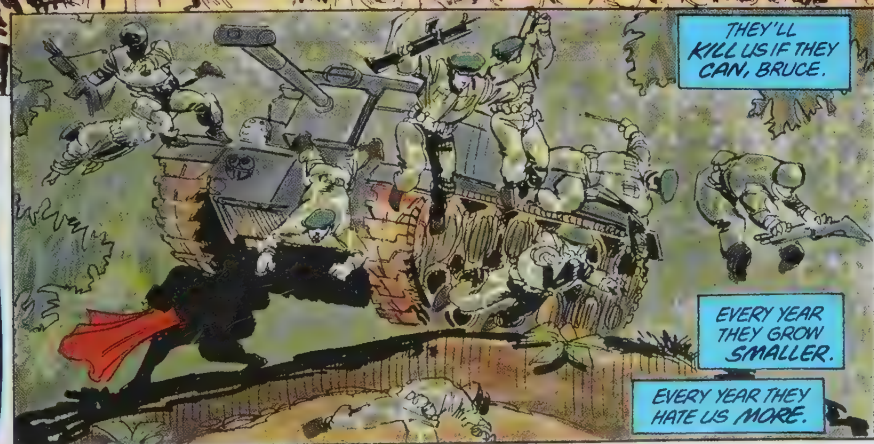
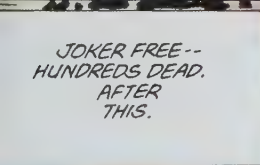
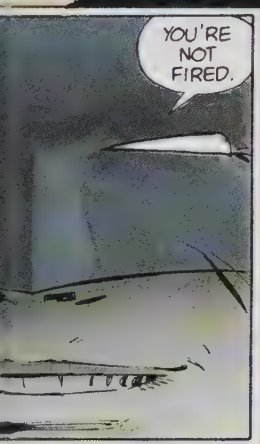
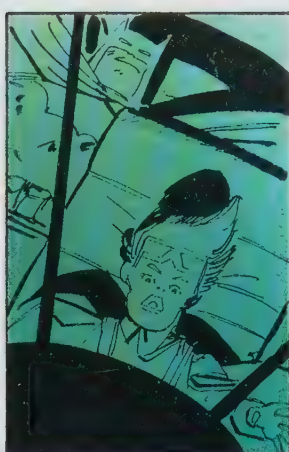
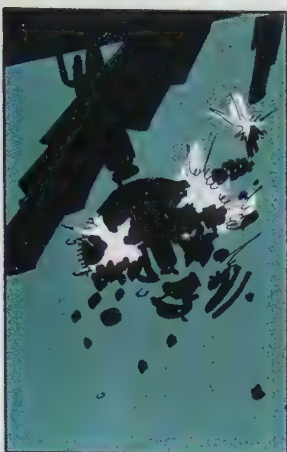
...SO YOUNG...

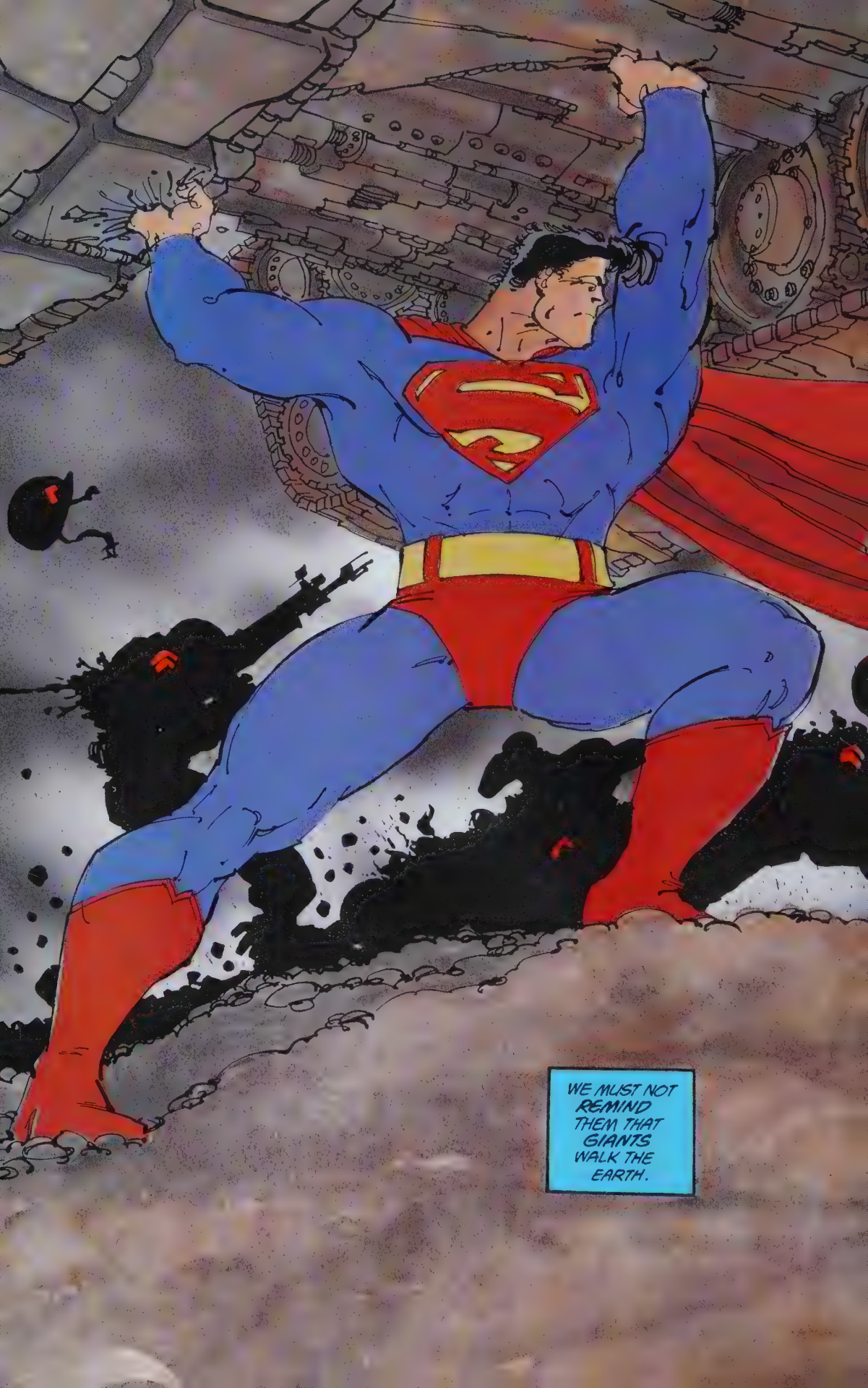


ACE THE CLOAK.









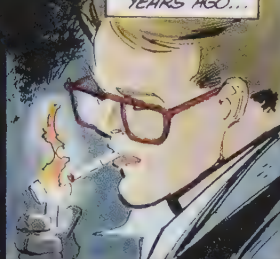
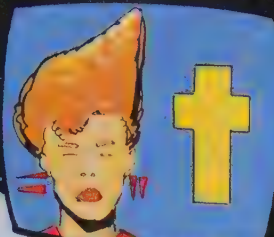
WE MUST NOT
REMINDE
THEM THAT
GIANTS
WALK THE
EARTH.

...URGING THE PUBLIC NOT TO WORRY, THE PRESIDENT HAS PLACED STRATEGIC AIR COMMANDS ON RED ALERT. "WE WON'T MAKE THE FIRST MOVE," SAID THE PRESIDENT, "BUT WE'RE READY TO MAKE THE LAST."

THE POPE TODAY DECLARED THAT THE CHURCH'S STAND ON CONTRACEPTION WILL NOT CHANGE, DESPITE YESTERDAY'S FIREBOMBING OF ST. PETER'S SQUARE... AND, IN LOCAL NEWS...

MY HEAD GOES LIGHT AND THE SMOKE COATS THE INSIDE OF MY MOUTH AND LEAVES A PATCH OF RED-HOT GRAVEL AT THE BASE OF MY THROAT.

I STOPPED DOING THIS TO MYSELF FIVE YEARS AGO...

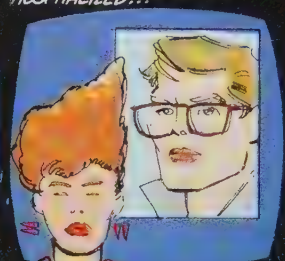
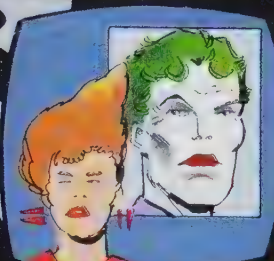


COMMISSIONER --WHITTAKER'S GONE ALL SICK. HE'S JUST A ROOKIE...

SEND HIM HOME, MERKEL. TELL HIM IT'S ALL RIGHT.

...TWO HUNDRED AND SIX WERE SLAIN DURING THE JOKER'S ESCAPE FROM THE DAVID ENDORCHINE SHOW INCLUDING HOST ENDORCHINE AND DR. BARTHOLOMEW WOLPER.

THE JOKER REPORTEDLY USED HIS DEADLY SMILE GAS ON THE CROWD. COMMISSIONER YINDEL REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THIS, OR ON THE ESCAPE OF THE BATMAN, WHICH LEFT TWELVE POLICE OFFICERS HOSPITALIZED...

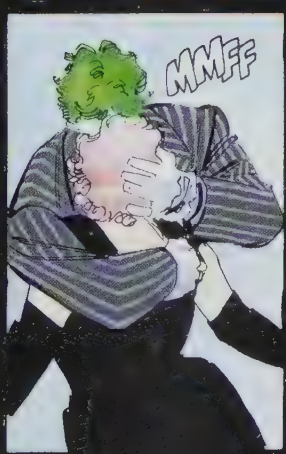


KYLE

ESCORT SERVICE, INC.

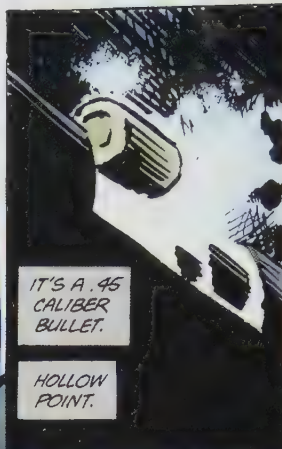
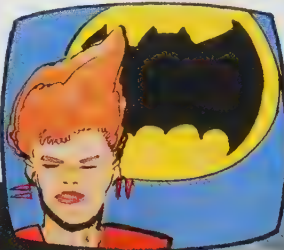
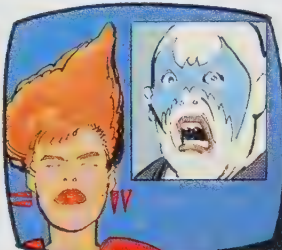
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME BACK, BRUCE.

AMERICAN EXPRESS CARDS WELCOME



...THE SONS OF THE BATMAN HAVE STRUCK AGAIN. IN FRONT OF A DOZEN WITNESSES, THEY ACCOSTED A SHOPLIFTER AND... CHOPPED HIS HANDS OFF...

THE SHOPLIFTER IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN CARRYING SEVERAL MAGAZINES AND A CANDY BAR... AS YET, POLICE REPORT NO EVIDENCE TO DIRECTLY LINK THE BATMAN TO THESE CRIMES...



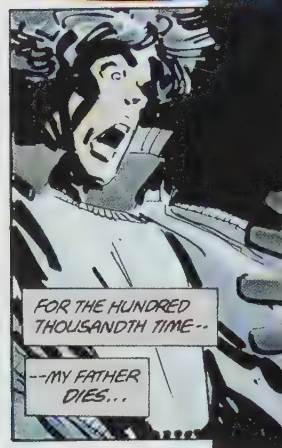
IT'S A .45 CALIBER BULLET.

HOLLOW POINT.



IT EXPLODES IN HIS CHEST.

I FEEL THE SHOCK THROUGH HIS FINGERS.



FOR THE HUNDRED THOUSANDTH TIME--

--MY FATHER DIES...

...WHERE'D YOU LEARN ABOUT COMPUTERS, ROBIN?

HAD TO LEARN SOMETHING IN SCHOOL...

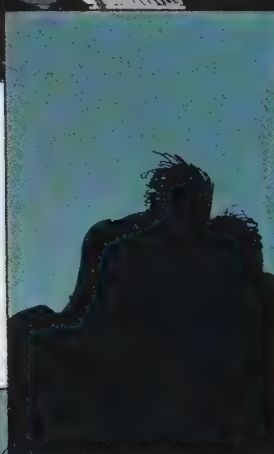


UHM...THIS I DIDN'T PAY FOR, ELSIE--

SHH...



NO--I MEAN IT-- I'M A HAPPILY MARRIED MAN...



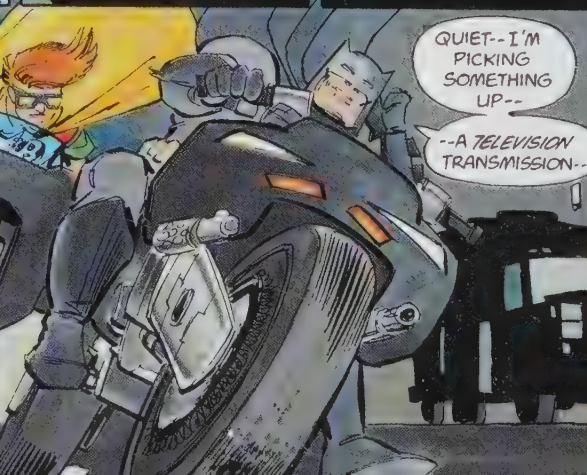
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO DO FOR ME, CONGRESSMAN. LISTEN CLOSELY...

YES... CLOSELY...



THIS UNIT HAS ITS OWN CONTROLS. HOWS IT DETACH?

I DON'T HAVE A LICENSE YET, BUT--

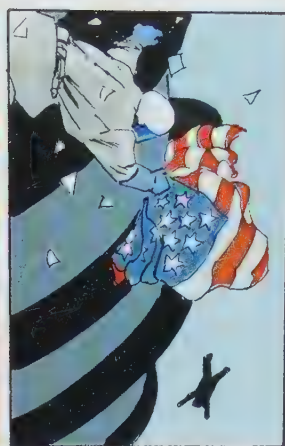
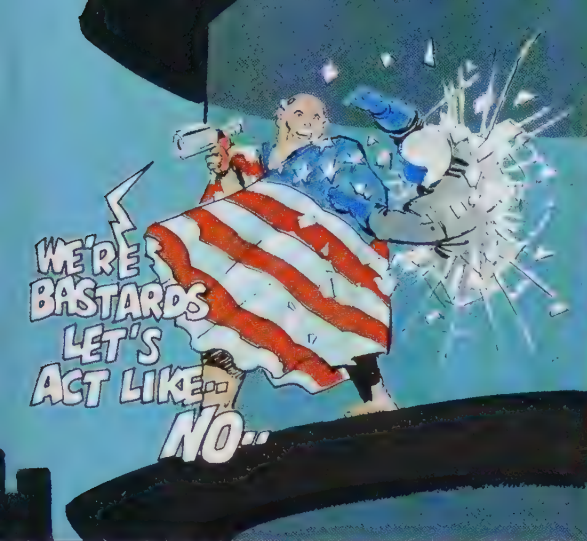


QUIET--I'M PICKING SOMETHING UP--

--A TELEVISION TRANSMISSION--

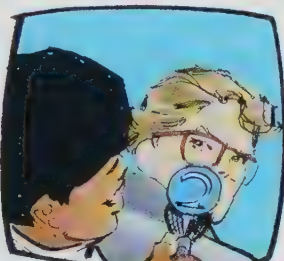


--HE'S STILL UP THERE, LOLA-- DRESSED IN NOTHING BUT AN AMERICAN FLAG, CONGRESSMAN NOCHES, PLEADING FOR A FULL NUCLEAR STRIKE ON CORTO MALTESE--



--HE'S DOWN, LOLA. HE'S STREET PIZZA. COMMISSIONER YINDEL IS ON THE SCENE-- LET'S SEE IF WE CAN GET HER TO SAY A FEW WORDS...

COMMISSIONER --DO YOU THINK THE JOKER-- GET THIS CLOWN OUT OF HERE.



THE GIRL WITH HIM IS FROM KYLE ESCORT. SHE'S BEEN DRUGGED SHUT THE JOINT DOWN-- AND PICK UP SELINA KYLE.

YES, MA'AM. THANK YOU, MA'AM. COMMISSIONER...

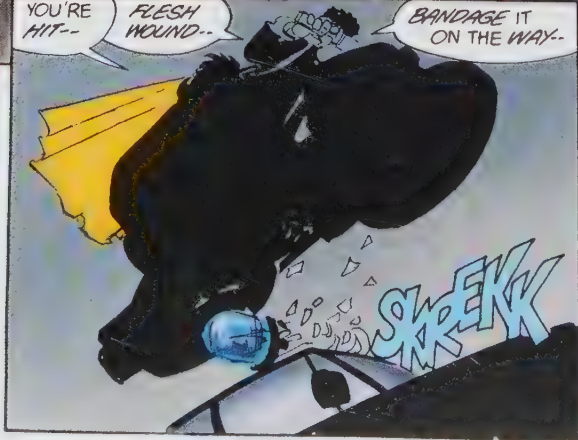
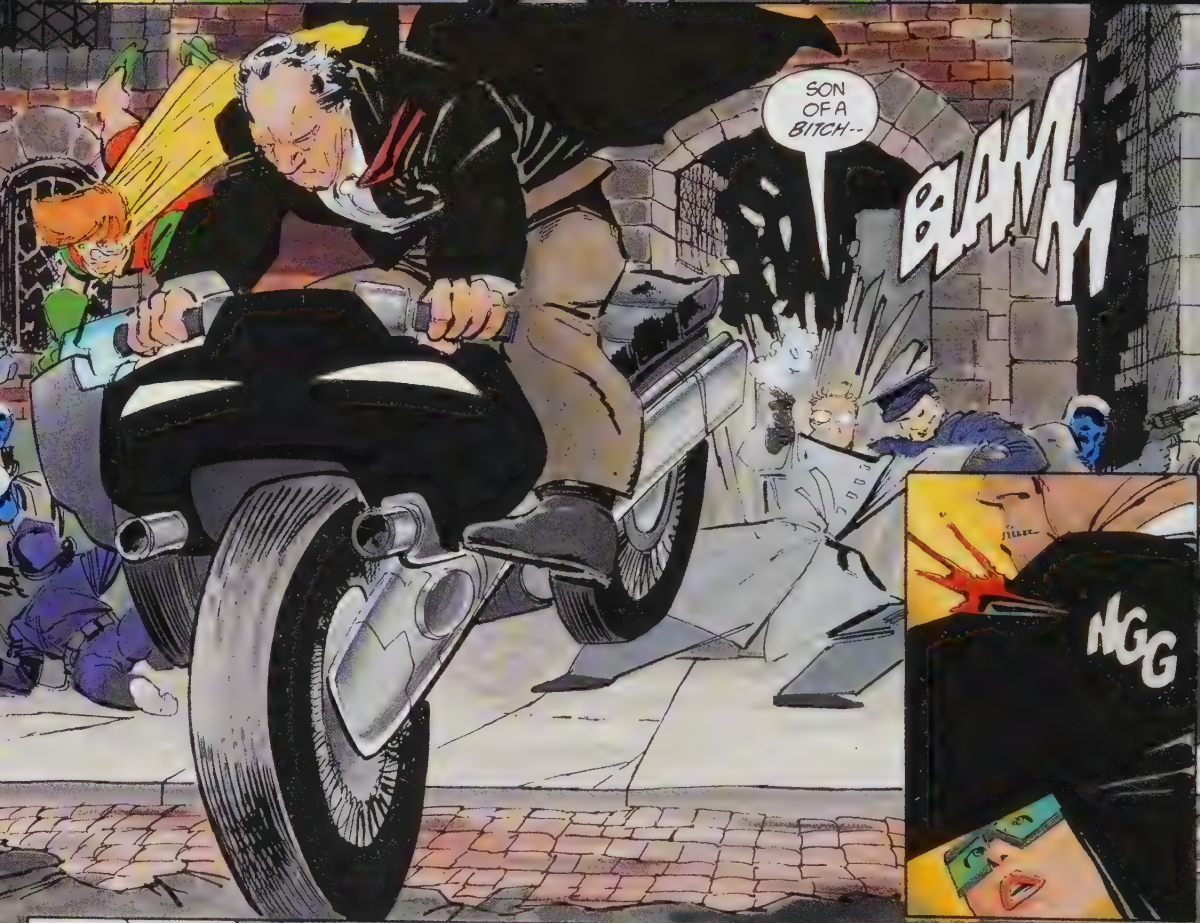
GALLAGHER'S HEARING ABOUT THIS!

O'HALLORAN, MA'AM. SIXTH PRECINCT. WHAT'VE WE GOT? IT'S NO SUICIDE, LIEUTENANT.

--O'HALLORAN, MA'AM. SIXTH PRECINCT. ANYTHING I CAN-- --SOMETHING WRONG, COMMISSIONER?

STOP THAT MAN! WHAT THE...



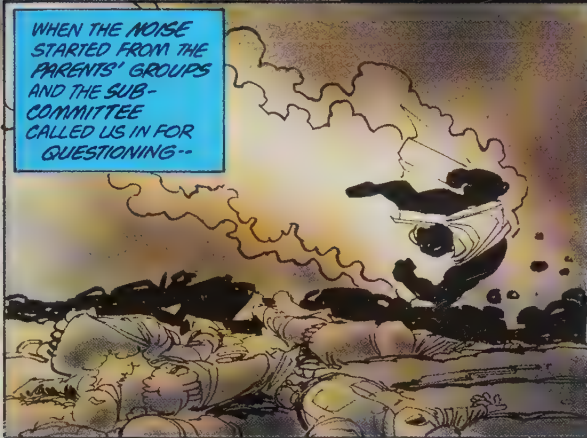


YOU WERE THE ONE
THEY USED AGAINST
US, BRUCE.

THE ONE
WHO PLAYED
IT ROUGH.

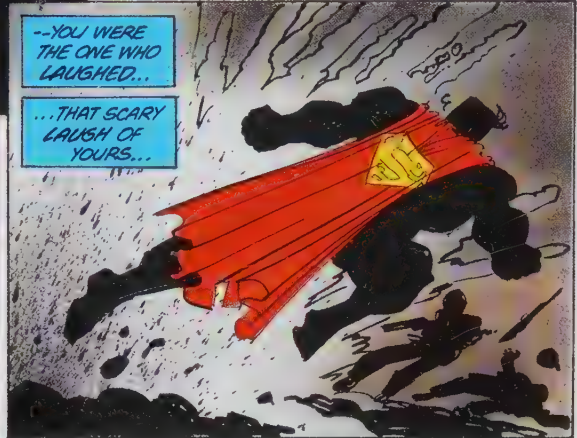


WHEN THE NOISE
STARTED FROM THE
PARENTS' GROUPS
AND THE SUB-
COMMITTEE
CALLED US IN FOR
QUESTIONING--



--YOU WERE
THE ONE WHO
LAUGHED...

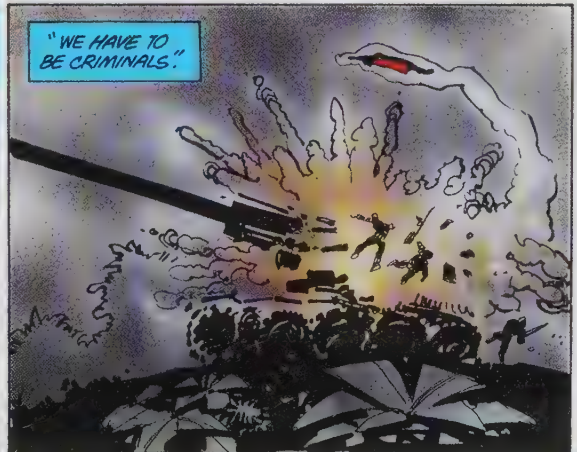
...THAT SCARY
LAUGH OF
YOURS...



"SURE WE'RE CRIMINALS,"
YOU SAID. "WE'VE ALWAYS
BEEN CRIMINALS."



"WE HAVE TO
BE CRIMINALS."



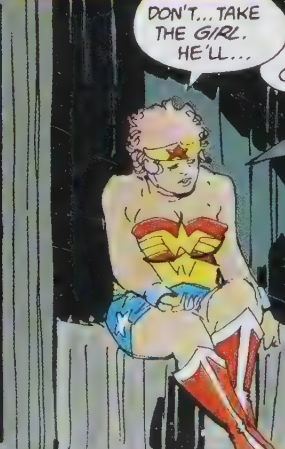
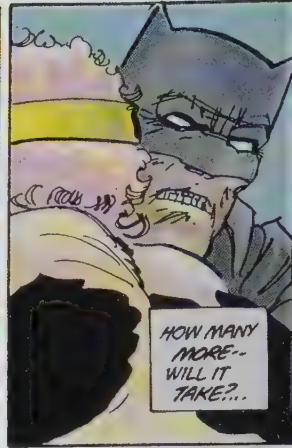
I'M FINE,
ROBIN.

JUST PICK
THAT LOOK
LIKE I TAUGHT
YOU.



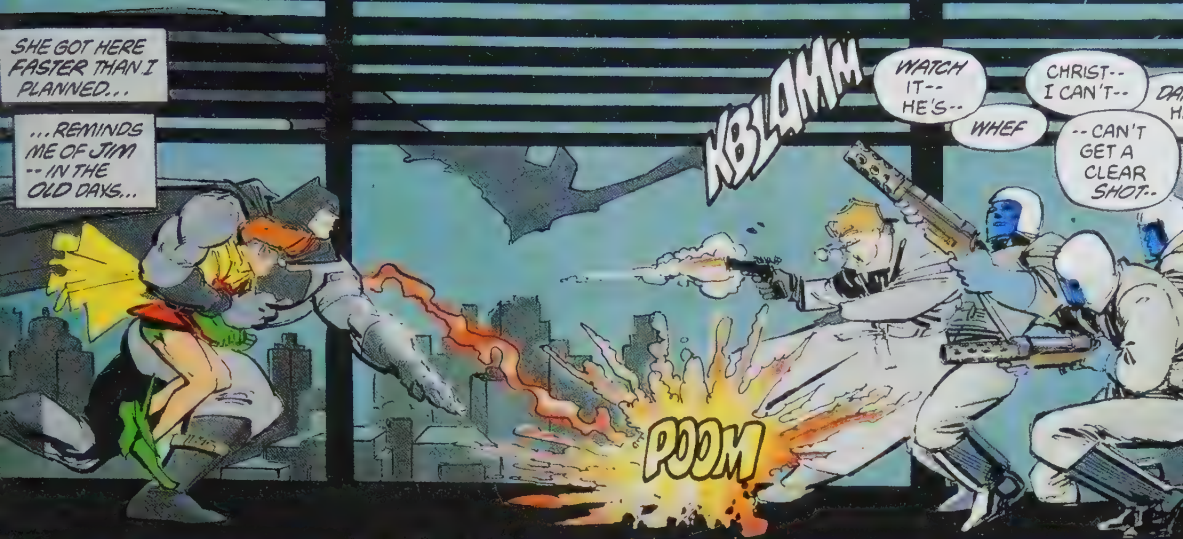
JUST CAME
OVER THE
HORN--
--NOBODY AT
KYLE ESCORT,
COMMISSIONER.

KYLE'S
APARTMENT,
MERKEL--



SHE GOT HERE
FASTER THAN I
PLANNED...

...REMINDS
ME OF JIM
-- IN THE
OLD DAYS...



KBBLAMM

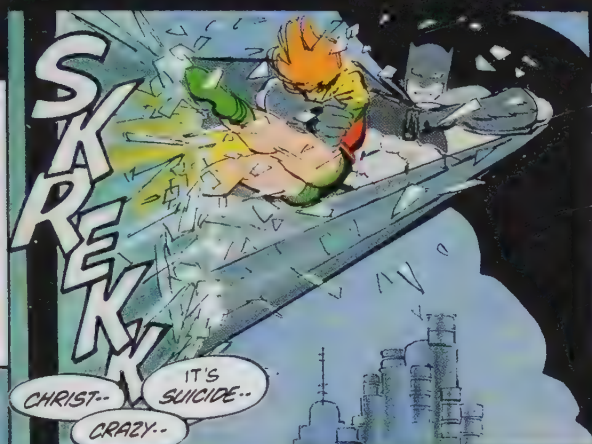
WATCH
IT--
HE'S--

CHRIST--
I CAN'T--

WHEE

-- CAN'T
GET A
CLEAR
SHOT--

POOM

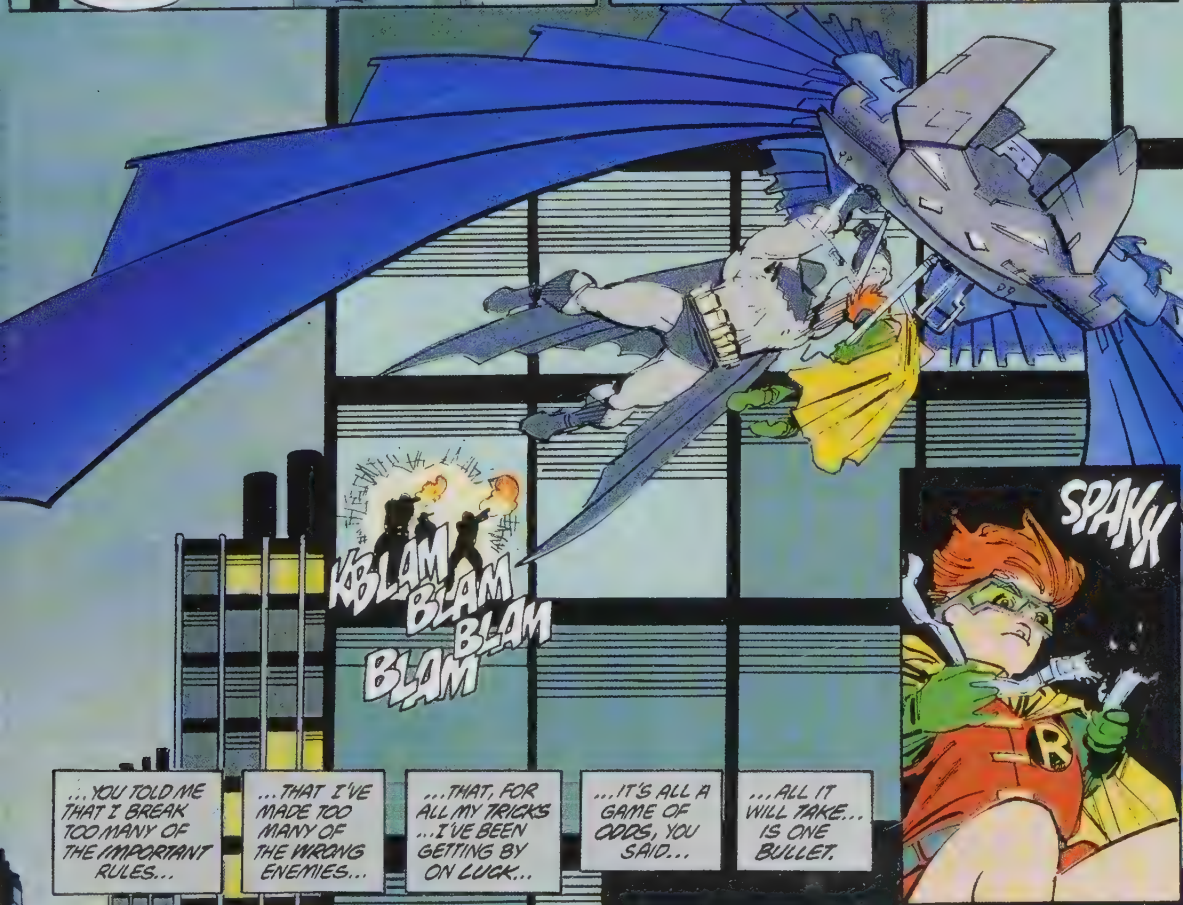


SKREK

CHRIST--
IT'S
SUICIDE--
CRAZY--

...YOU TRIED
TO WARN
ME, JIM...

...SO
MANY
TIMES...



KBBLAMM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

SPARK

...YOU TOLD ME
THAT I BREAK
TOO MANY OF
THE IMPORTANT
RULES...

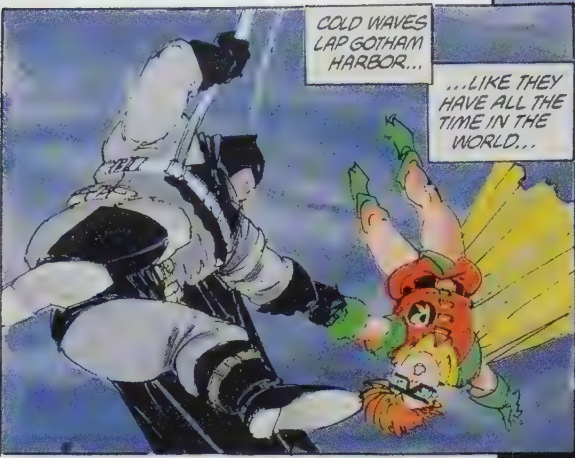
...THAT I'VE
MADE TOO
MANY OF
THE WRONG
ENEMIES...

...THAT, FOR
ALL MY TRICKS
...I'VE BEEN
GETTING BY
ON LUCK...

...IT'S ALL A
GAME OF
ODDS, YOU
SAID...

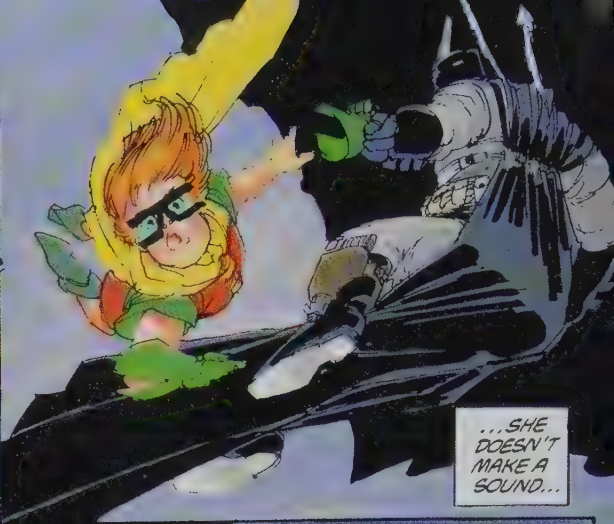
...ALL IT
WILL TAKE...
IS ONE
BULLET.



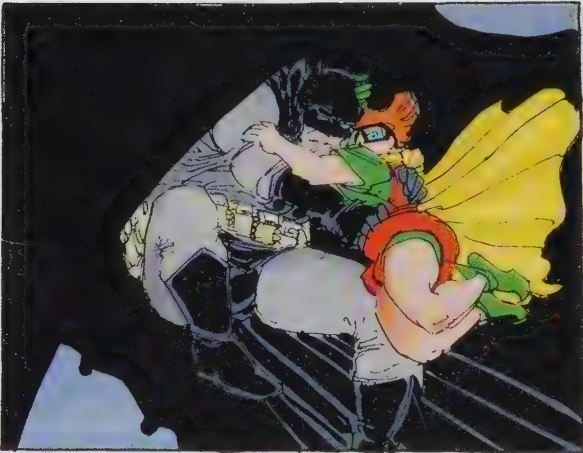
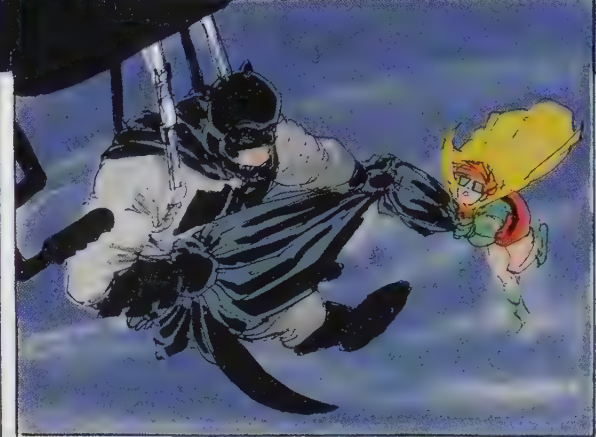


COLD WAVES
LAP GOTHAM
HARBOR...

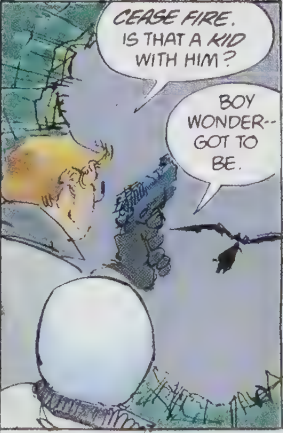
...LIKE THEY
HAVE ALL THE
TIME IN THE
WORLD...



...SHE
DOESN'T
MAKE A
SOUND...

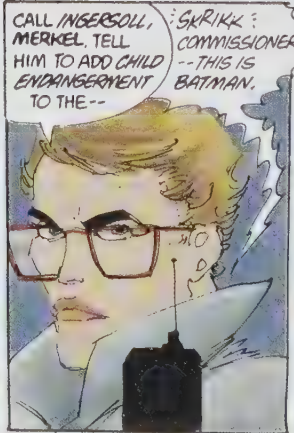


GOOD
SOLDIER.
GOOD
SOLDIER.



CEASE FIRE.
IS THAT A KID
WITH HIM?

BOY
WONDER--
GOT TO
BE.

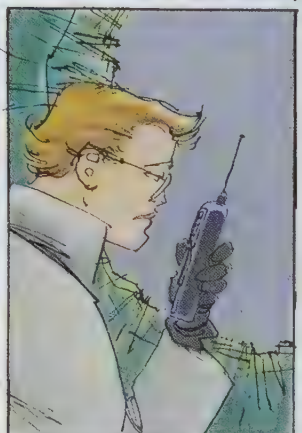


CALL INSERSOLL,
MERKEL. TELL
HIM TO ADD CHILD
ENDANGERMENT
TO THE--

SKRIKK :
COMMISSIONER
--THIS IS BATMAN.

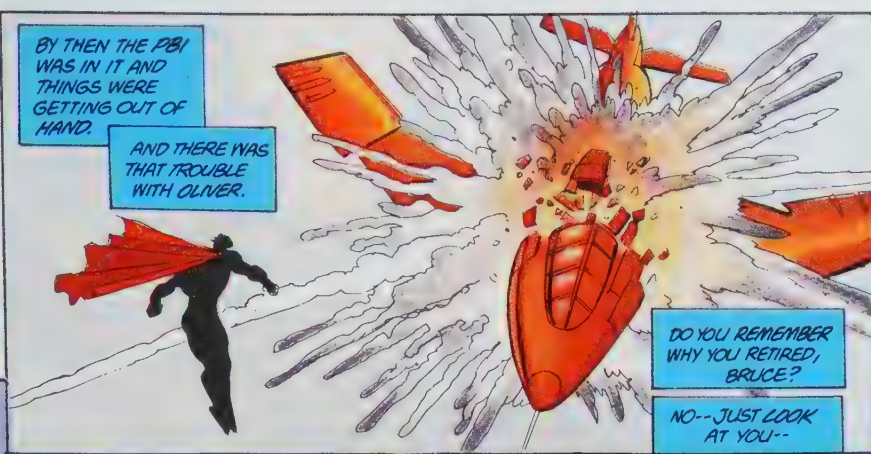


THE GOVERNOR'S
LIFE IS IN
DANGER. I
HAVEN'T TIME
TO SAVE HIM.
IT'S UP TO
YOU.





WE ALMOST
THREW A
PARTY
WHEN YOU
RETIRED.



BY THEN THE FBI
WAS IN IT AND
THINGS WERE
GETTING OUT OF
HAND.

AND THERE WAS
THAT TROUBLE
WITH OLIVER.

DO YOU REMEMBER
WHY YOU RETIRED,
BRUCE?

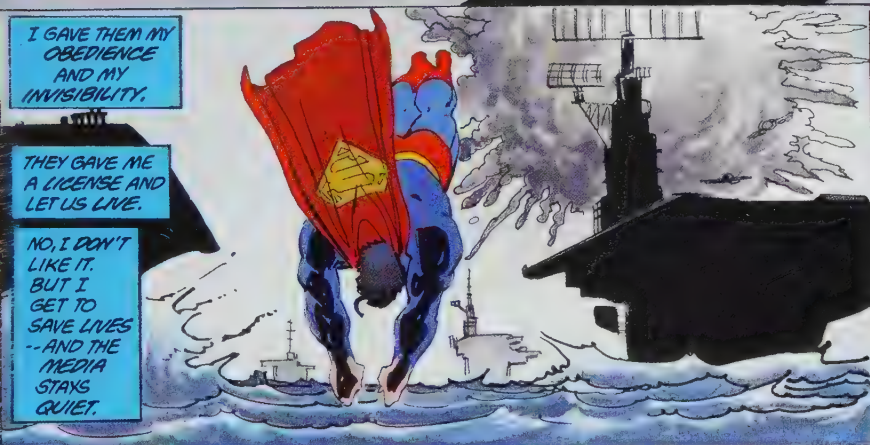
NO--JUST LOOK
AT YOU--

--YOU'D DO IT
AGAIN-- AND
LIKE A MURDERER,
YOU'D COVER IT
UP AGAIN.

NOTHING
MATTERS TO
YOU-- EXCEPT
YOUR HOLY
WAR.



THEY WERE CONSIDERING
THEIR OPTIONS AND
YOU WERE PROBABLY
STILL LAUGHING WHEN
WE CAME TO TERMS.



I GAVE THEM MY
OBEDIENCE
AND MY
INVISIBILITY.

THEY GAVE ME
A LICENSE AND
LET US LIVE.

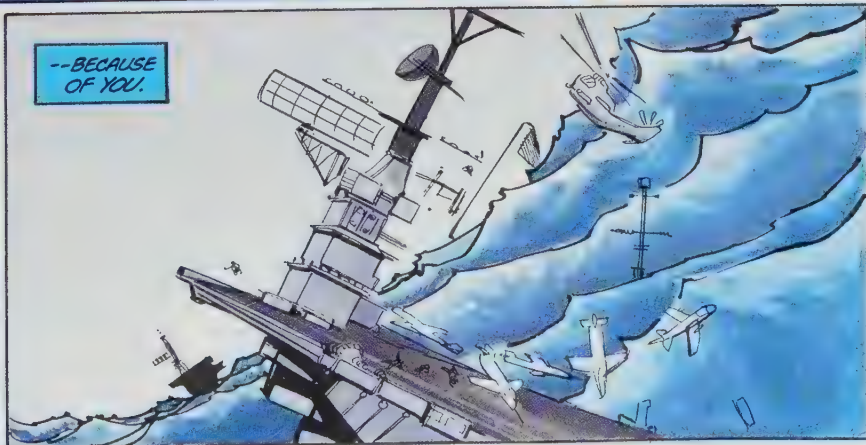
NO, I DON'T
LIKE IT.
BUT I
GET TO
SAVE LIVES
--AND THE
MEDIA
STAYS
QUIET.



BUT NOW
THE STORM
IS GROWING
AGAIN--



--THEY'LL
HUNT US
DOWN
AGAIN--



--BECAUSE
OF YOU.

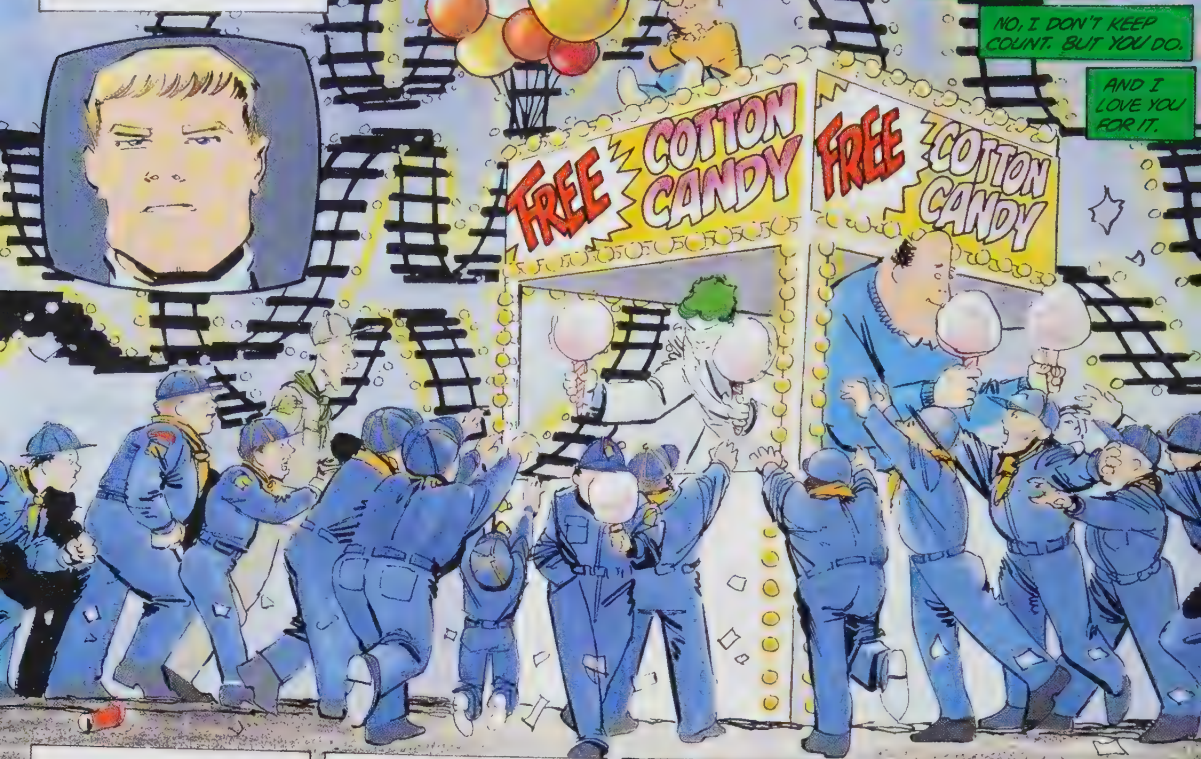
... COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUT CONTINUES AT CORTO MALTESE, AS DO THE BIZARRE NATURAL DISTURBANCES. HUNDRED-MILE-AN-HOUR WINDS LASH THE PORT OF SAN CONCEPCION, SIXTY MILES SOUTH OF CORTO...

THEY COULD PUT ME IN A HELICOPTER AND FLY ME UP INTO THE AIR AND LINE THE BODIES HEAD TO TOE ON THE GROUND IN DELIGHTFUL GEOMETRIC PATTERNS LIKE AN ENDLESS JUNE TAYLOR DANCERS ROUTINE --

-- AND IT WOULD NEVER BE ENOUGH.

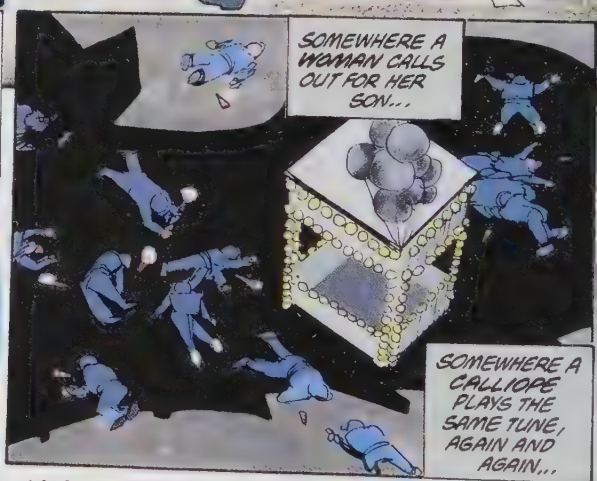
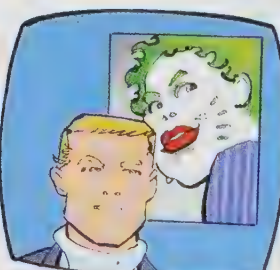
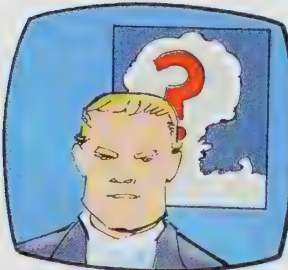
NO, I DON'T KEEP COUNT. BUT YOU DO.

AND I LOVE YOU FOR IT.



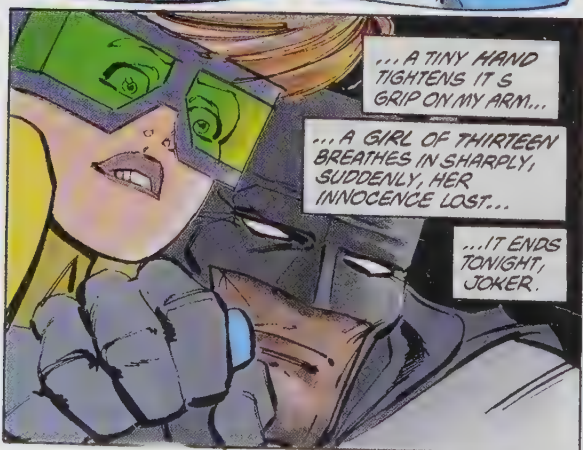
...PENTAGON CHIEF GENERAL CUCUS LOCKHEED CONFIRMS THAT STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND STANDS AT DEF CON THREE-- A HEARTBEAT FROM DEPLOYMENT. "WE'RE PRIMED," SAYS LOCKHEED...

... APPREHENDED WHILE TRYING TO POISON THE GOTHAM RESERVOIR WERE FORMER MEMBERS OF THE MUTANT GANG. THEIR SKIN WAS PAINTED CHALK WHITE, THEIR HAIR DYED GREEN...



SOMEWHERE A WOMAN CALLS OUT FOR HER SON...

SOMEWHERE A CALLIOPE PLAYS THE SAME TUNE, AGAIN AND AGAIN...



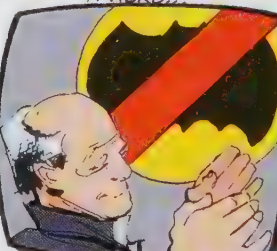
... A TINY HAND TIGHTENS IT'S GRIP ON MY ARM...

... A GIRL OF THIRTEEN BREATHE IN SHARPLY, SUDDENLY, HER INNOCENCE LOST...

...IT ENDS TONIGHT, JOKER.

LANA, YOU ASTONISH ME. FIFTEEN POLICEMEN HOSPITALIZED-- HUNDREDS DEAD-- AND STILL YOU CLING TO THIS HERO WORSHIP. THOUGH HOW ANYONE CAN THINK OF A DEFACED MURDERER AS A HERO...

BATMAN HASN'T KILLED ANYBODY, MORRIE.



PERHAPS HE HASN'T--
TECHNICALLY, THAT'S WHY
I SAID DE FACTO, LANA
DEAR. STILL, IT'S HARDLY
A COINCIDENCE THAT THE
JOKER CAME OUT OF A
TEN-YEAR CATATONIA--
NOW, OF ALL TIMES...

THANK
THE NICE
MAN,
DONALD.

I WANT
THE KIND
THAT
TALKS.

PISS
OFF.

UH, BOSS--
THERE'S A BAT
HEADING OUR
WAY.
IT'S BIG,
IT'S...

...IT'S HIM.

I'LL MAKE SURE THE BOMB GOES OFF.

WHAT-- WHAT ARE THEY--

HEY!

UP THERE-- IT'S--

BOBBIE-- HEY--

-- IT'S BATMAN--

RIGHT, RIGHT...

KUK KLAK KLIK KLAK

BOSS--
IT'S ONE OF
THOSE--

TK TK TK

IT'S LOADED,
ROBIN--

--LET IT
GET CLOSE--

--WAIT
FOR MY
ORDER--



CAN YOU SEE IT,
JOKER? FEELS
TO ME... LIKE IT'S
WRITTEN ALL
OVER MY FACE.

I'VE LAIN
AWAKE
NIGHTS...
PLANNING
IT...
PICTURING
IT...

...ENDLESS
NIGHTS...

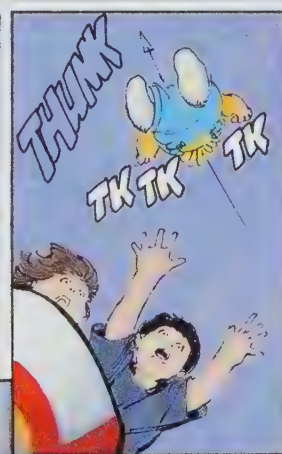
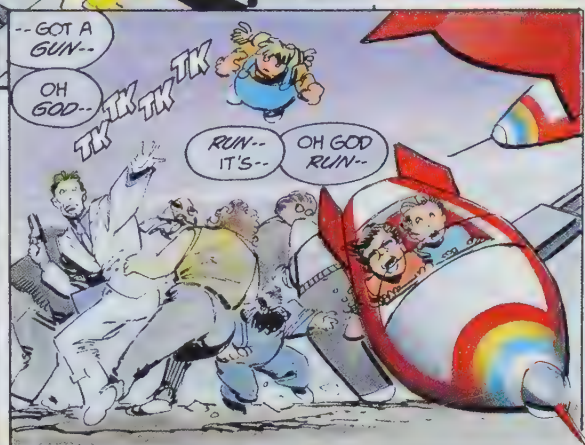
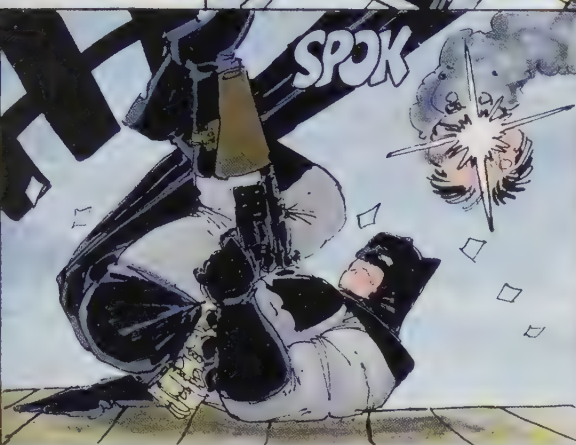
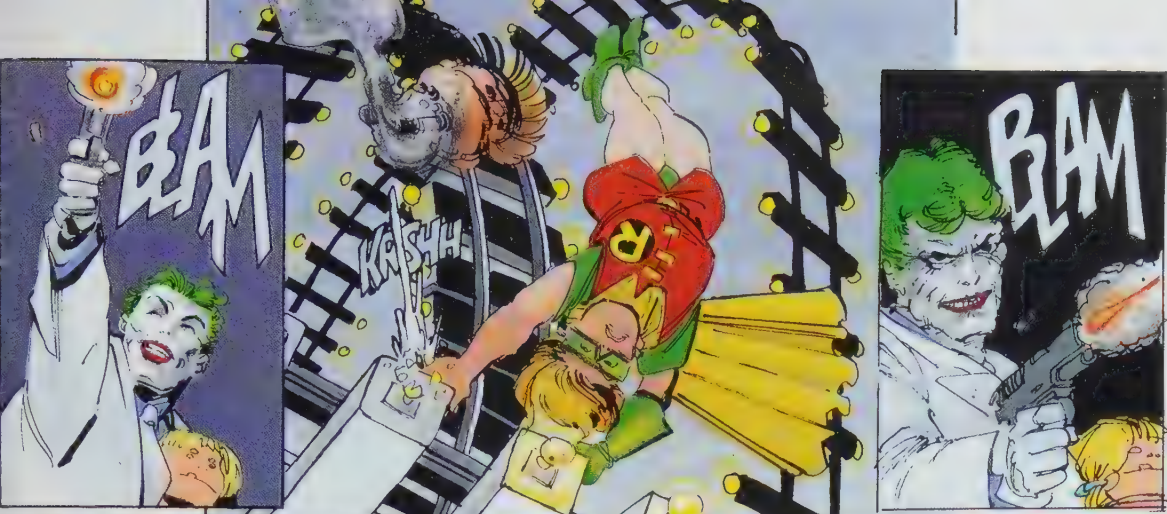
...CONSIDERING EVERY
POSSIBLE METHOD...
TREASURING EACH
IMAGINARY MOMENT...

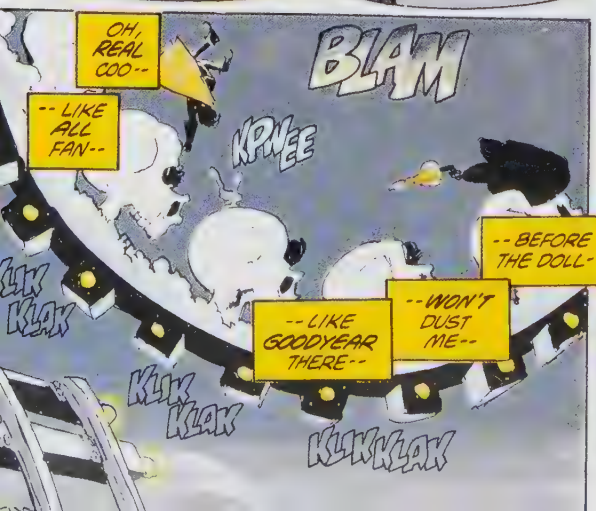
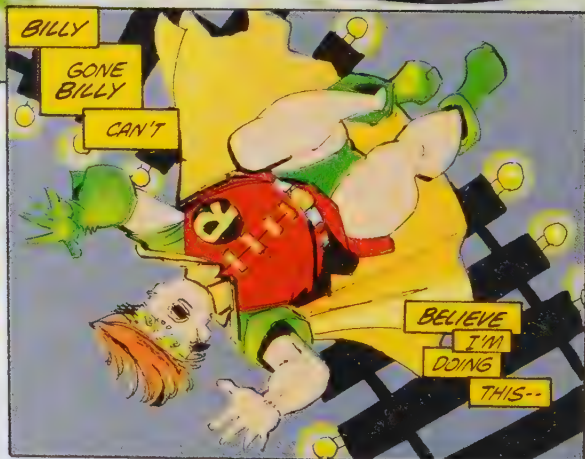
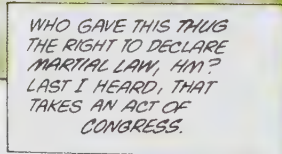
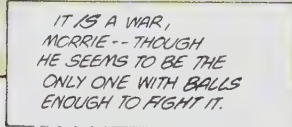
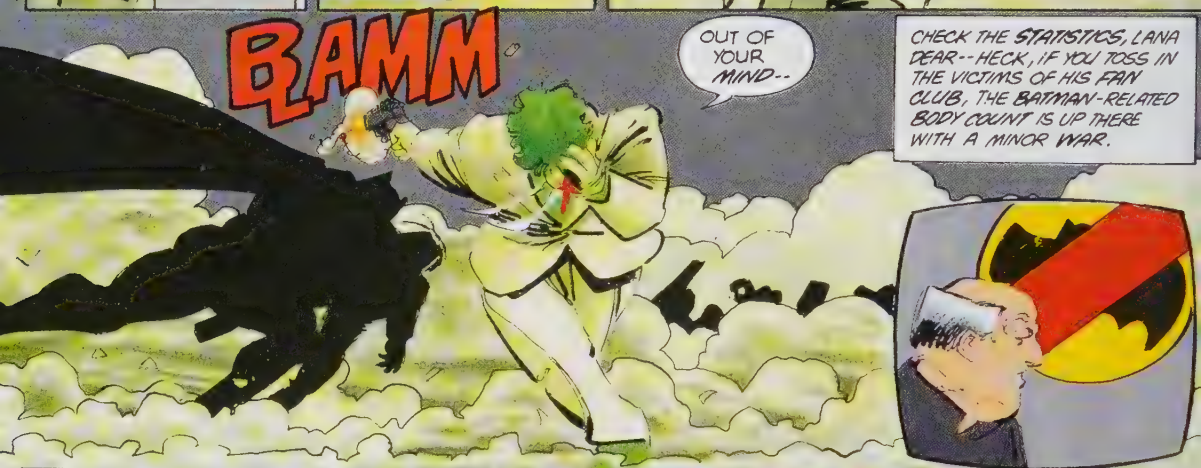
FROM THE
BEGINNING,
I KNEW...

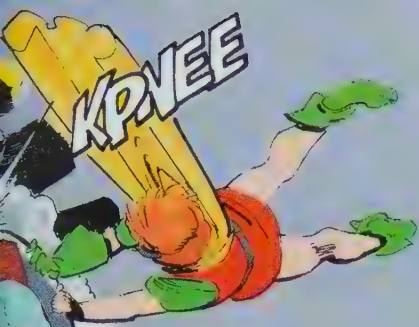
...THAT THERE'S
NOTHING WRONG
WITH YOU...

...THAT I
CAN'T FIX...

...WITH MY
HANDS...







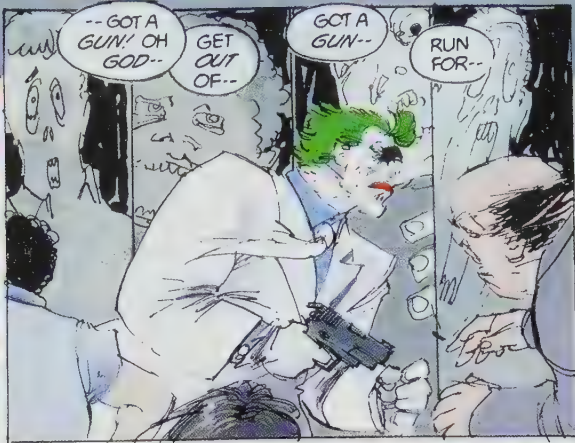
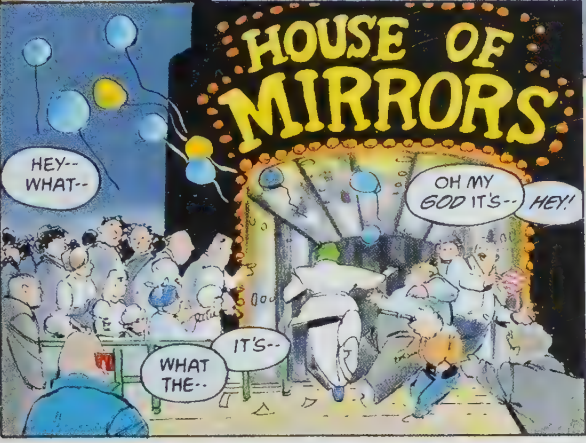
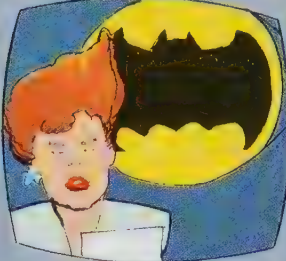
LIKE FOR THIS--

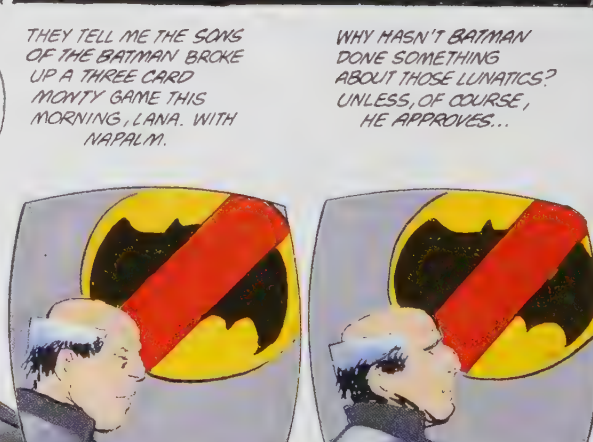
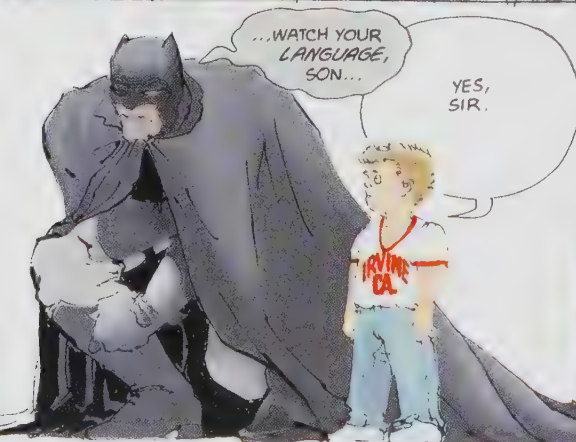
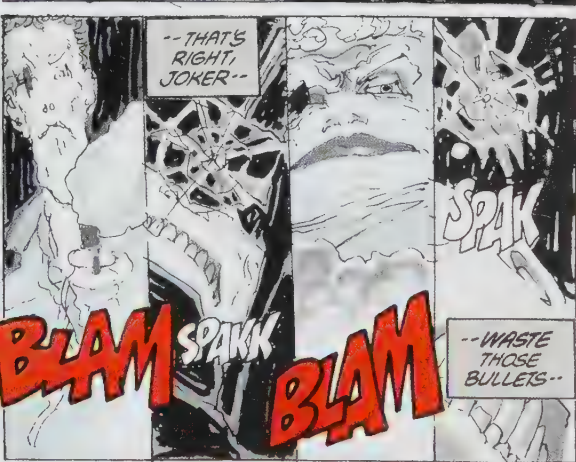
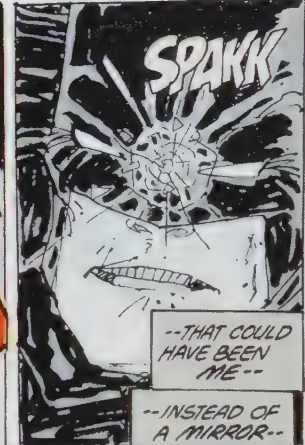
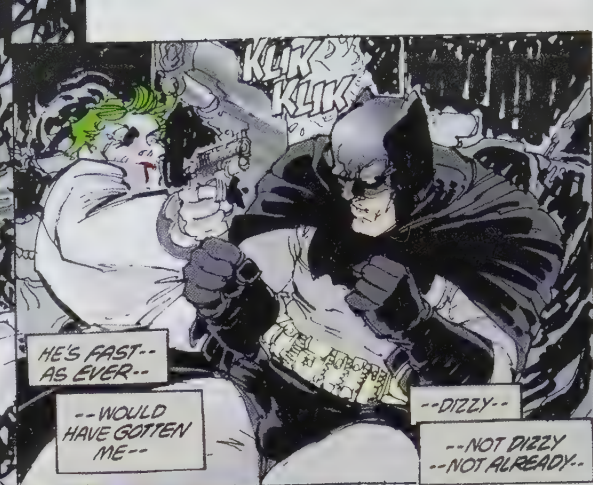
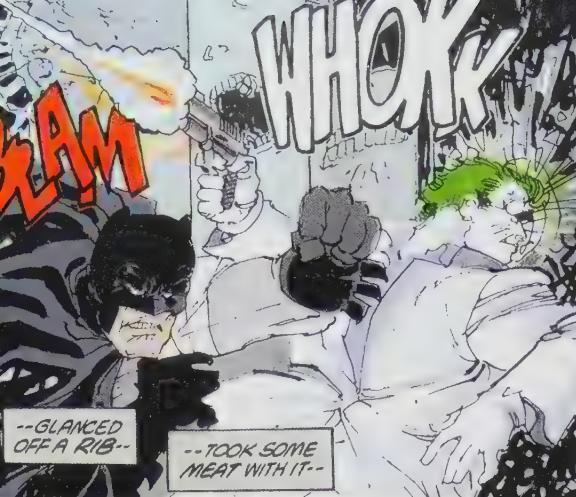
-- I MISSED THE GYM FINALS--

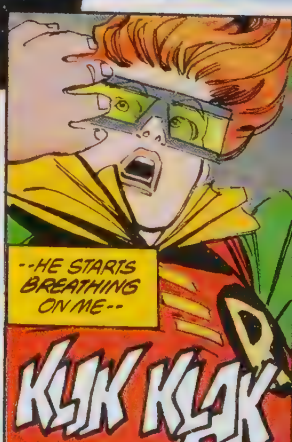
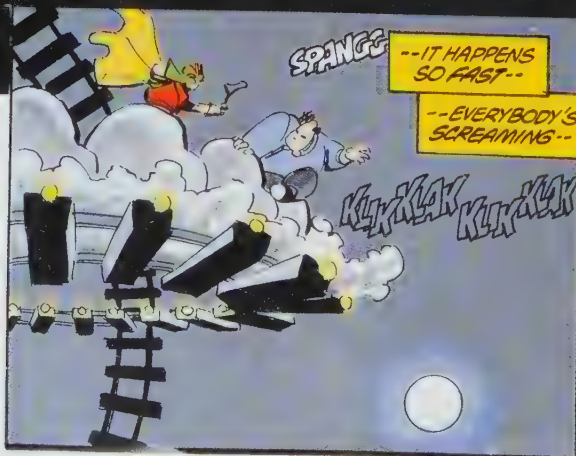
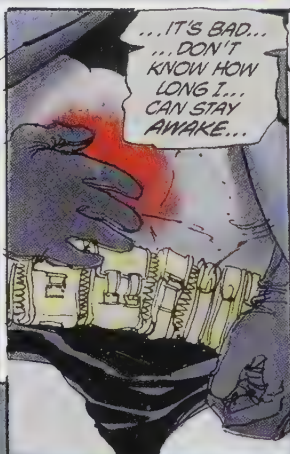
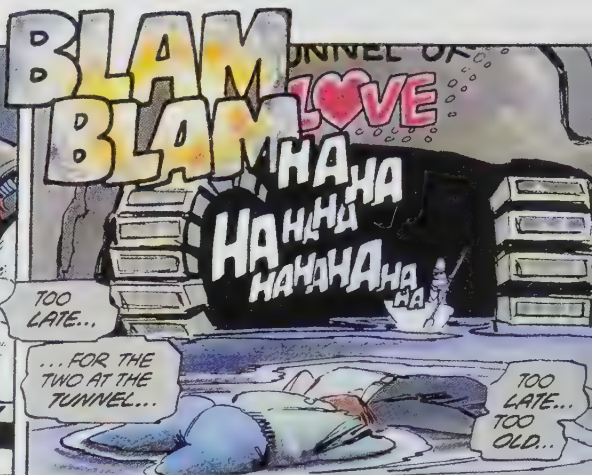
KLK KLK KLK KLK

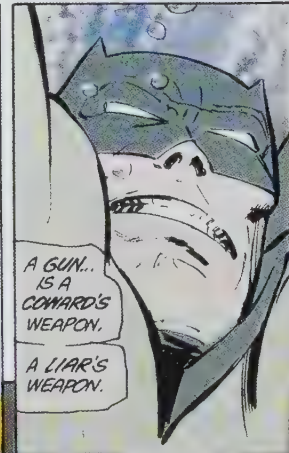
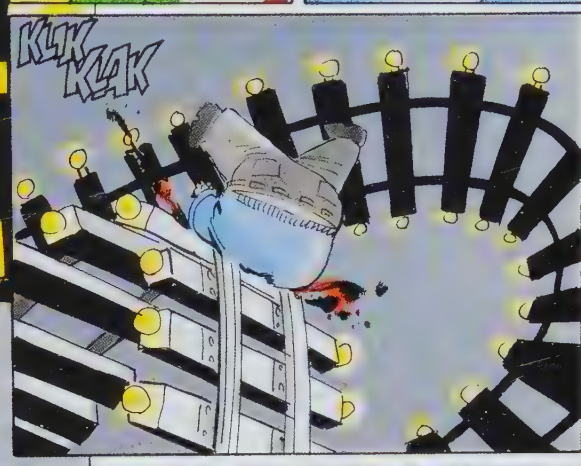
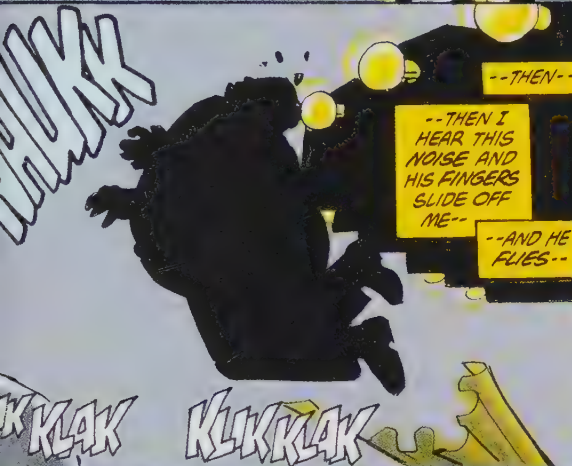
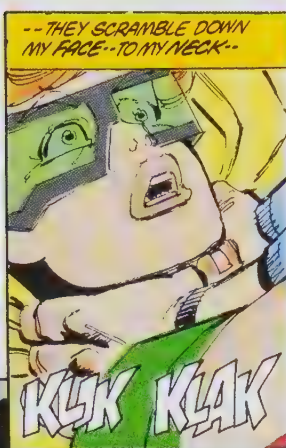
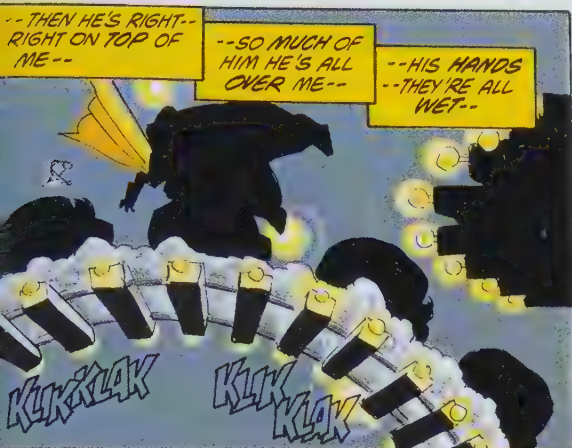
-- CHILD ENDANGERMENT IS THE LATEST CHARGE AGAINST THE BATMAN, REPORTS POLICE MEDIA RELATIONS DIRECTOR LOUIS GALLAGHER. BATMAN HAS BEEN SIGHTED USING A YOUNG BOY...

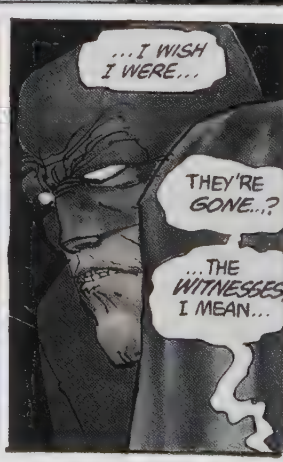
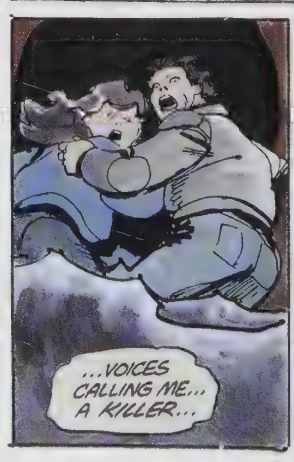
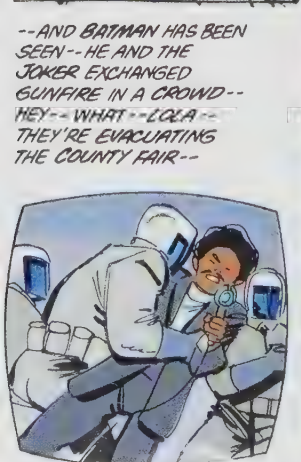
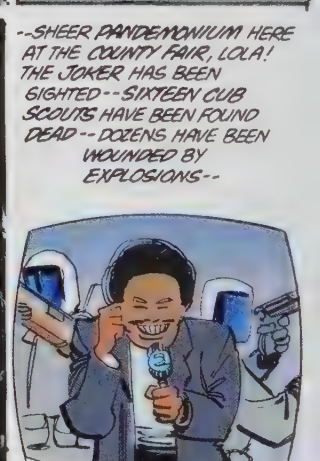
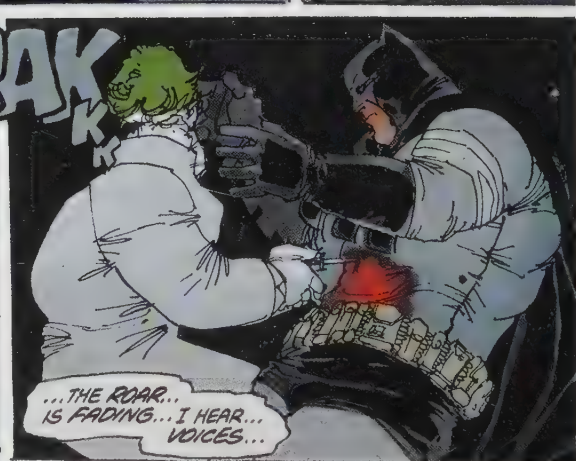
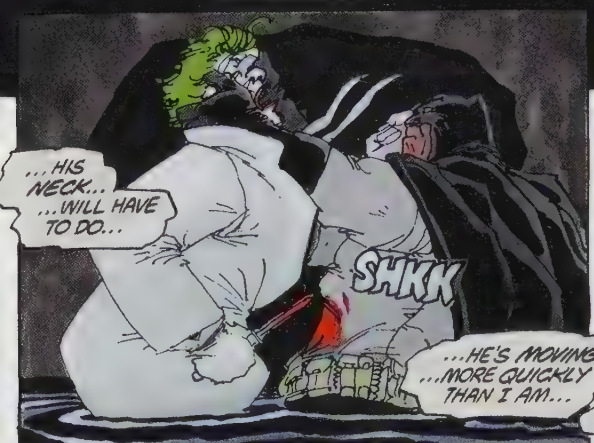
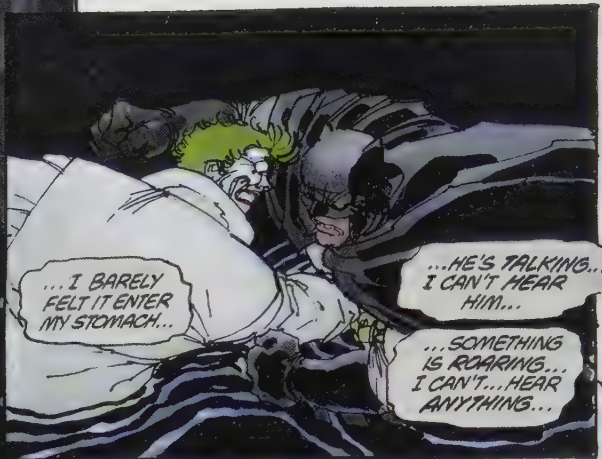
... AS A SHIELD AGAINST POLICE GUNFIRE. COMING UP-- COMMISSIONER YINDEL SAVES THE GOVERNOR FROM LITERALLY STRANGLING HIMSELF WITH RED TAPE...

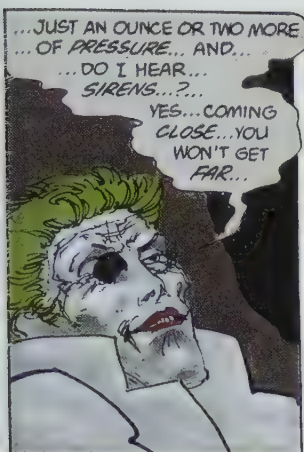










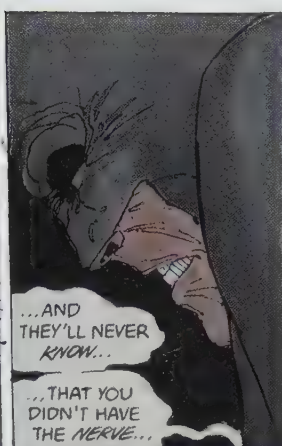


...JUST AN OUNCE OR TWO MORE
...OF PRESSURE... AND...
...DO I HEAR...
SIRENS...?
YES... COMING
CLOSE... YOU
WON'T GET
FAR...



...BUT THEN...
IT DOESN'T
MATTER... IF
YOU DO...

... THEY'LL
KILL YOU
FOR THIS...



...AND
THEY'LL NEVER
KNOW...

...THAT YOU
DIDN'T HAVE
THE NERVE...

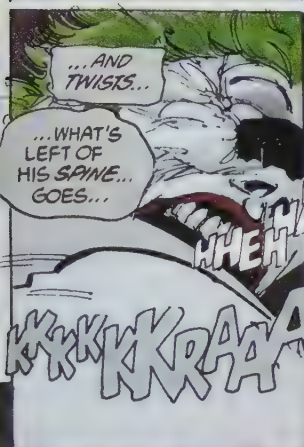


I'LL... SEE
YOU... IN
HELL--

WITH A
DEVIL'S
STRENGTH...
...HE
TWISTS...

HEHH

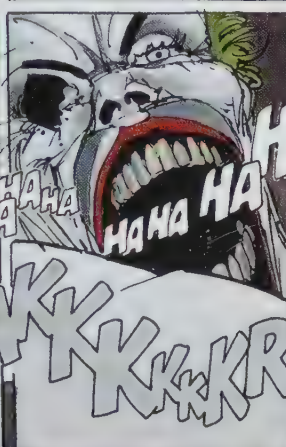
KKKKKK



...AND
TWISTS...

...WHAT'S
LEFT OF
HIS SPINE...
GOES...

HEHH



HAHAHA

HAHAHA

HAHAHA

HAHAHA

HAHAHA

HAHAHA

HAHAHA

HAHAHA

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HAHAHA

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HAHAHA



... WHATEVER'S IN
HIM RUSTLES AS
IT LEAVES.

...THE SIRENS ECHO
THROUGH THE TUNNEL...
TIRES SCREECH...
...THE WORLD
IS GROWING
DARK...

...AND
COLD...



FM



FM/LV

THAT'S RIGHT, CAPTAIN--
THE COMMISSIONER GOT
TIRED OF WAITING. TOOK
A SQUAD IN HERSELF.

--GOT THE OTHER
END SEALED--
NO WAY THEY'LL
GET PAST US--

YOU LIKE
THAT BITCH,
DON'T YOU,
MERKEL?

--WITNESSES
SAY THEY
BOTH GOT
GUNS--

--KEEP AN
EYE OUT--

TUNNEL OF
LOVE

...SHOWDOWN AT THE
COUNTY FAIR, WHERE THE
JOKER IS SAID TO HAVE
MURDERED AT LEAST
TWENTY. SIGHTED WAS
THE BATMAN, IN HOT
PURSUIT OF THE JOKER...

--GET SOME
BODY BAGS--
GOT TWO
COLD ONES--

...LED BY COMMISSIONER
YINDEL, POLICE WERE LAST
SEEN CONVERGING ON
THE TUNNEL OF LOVE,
WITH ARREST ORDERS FOR
BOTH THE JOKER-- AND
FOR GOTHAM'S VIGILANTE...



I WASTE ONE
SECOND... WITH
A GOOD-BYE...



I SAID
DON'T
TOUCH--

JESUS--

RIGGED
THE BODY--

--LIEUTENANT--
GET HIM
COVERED--

--SON OF
A BITCH
RIGGED THE
BODY--

SO DARK,
MAN...

CAREFUL,
NOW...
QUIET...

--CAN'T SEE
A DAMN
THING--

--SO
DARK--

TAKE
IT SLOW...



THE INCENDIARIES...
ARE IN PLACE...



THE ENEMY... IS
SECONDS AWAY...

COMMISSIONER--
OVER HERE--



IT'S THE
JOKER--

--IT'S NO
SUICIDE--



SERGEANT
--DON'T
TOUCH IT--

AAAAA

NOW...
WHILE THEY'RE
SCARED...

WHILE MY GUNS
ARE STILL...
WHERE THEY
BELONG...





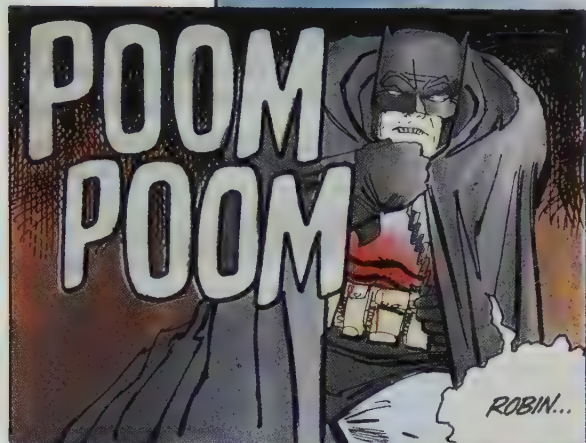
CHRIST
IT'S--

SPREADING
--IT'S--

FIRE'S
SPREADING--

HOLY--

POOM

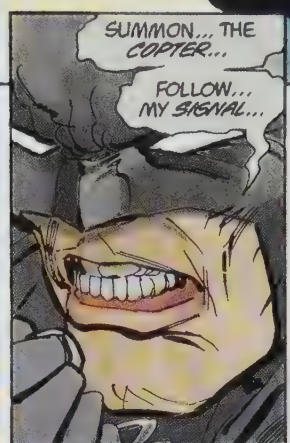


ROBIN...



...COME IN...
ROBIN...

KLK KLAK



SUMMON... THE
COPTER...

FOLLOW...
MY SIGNAL...



...YES, SIR. I'M
PUNCHING THE
CODE IN--

UH-OH-- GOT
TROUBLE,
BOSS.

WHUP
WHUP

KLK
KLAK



ATTENTION. AS IN
MEDIA.

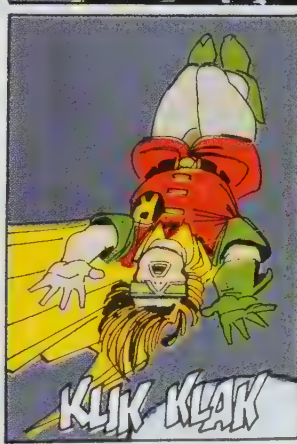
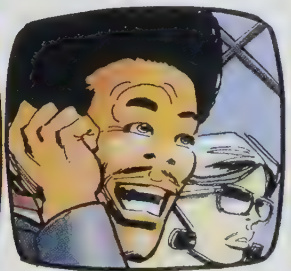
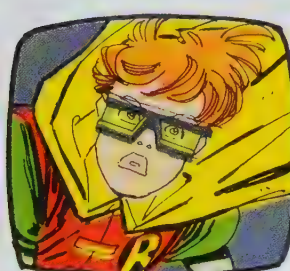
WHUP
WHUP

KLK
KLAK

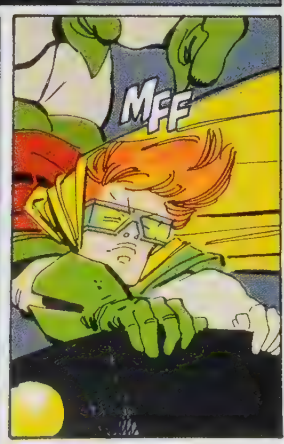
KLK
KLAK

CLOSER-- MOVE IN CLOSER--
LOLA-- CAN YOU SEE
IT?-- LIVE FROM THE
NEWS TWO COPTER--
IT'S ROBIN-- THE
BOY WONDER!

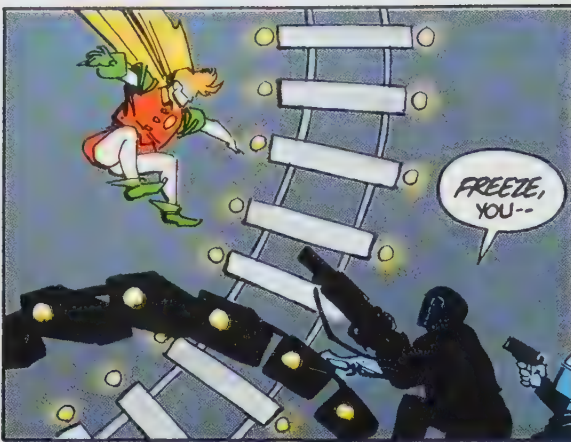
HE'S YOUNG-- CAN'T
BE OLDER THAN
THIRTEEN-- HE'S
RIDING THE ROLLER
COASTER-- HE'S
WAIT-- HE'S--



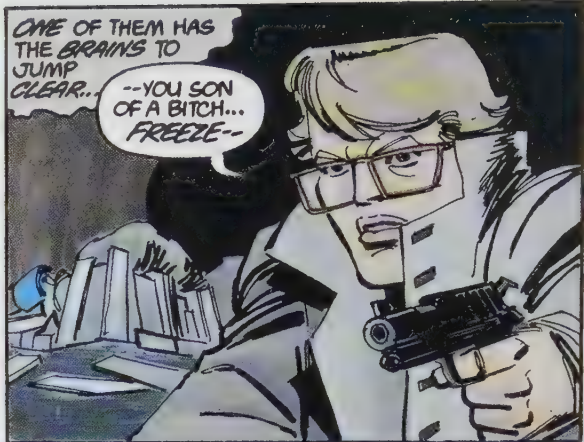
KLK KLAK



MFF



FREEZE,
YOU--

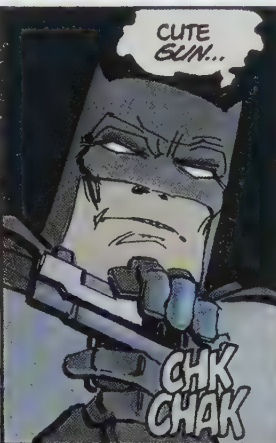


ONE OF THEM HAS
THE BRAINS TO
JUMP
CLEAR...

--YOU SON
OF A BITCH...
FREEZE--



WHOO

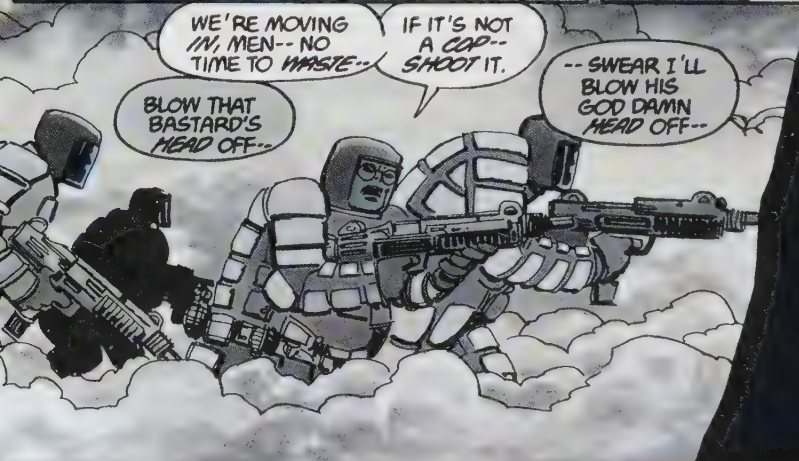


CUTE
GUN...

CHK
CHK



STOP...
... STOP
LAUGHING...

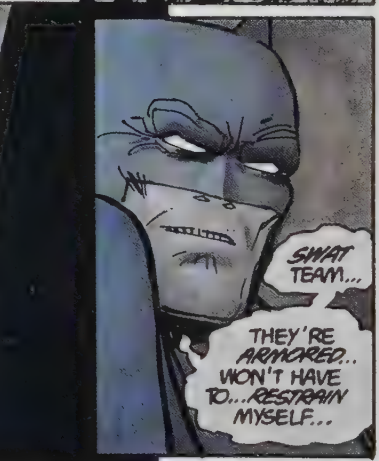


WE'RE MOVING
IN, MEN-- NO
TIME TO WASTE--

IF IT'S NOT
A CAP--
SHOOT IT.

BLOW THAT
BASTARD'S
HEAD OFF--

-- SWEAR I'LL
BLOW HIS
GOD DAMN
HEAD OFF--



SWAT
TEAM...

THEY'RE
ARMORED...
WON'T HAVE
TO... RESTRAIN
MYSELF...



JUST ENOUGH
TIME TO--



BLACKED OUT...
CAN'T AFFORD
THAT...

GOOD...
DIDN'T
GET THE
GUN WET...

I'LL NEED IT...
PROVIDED I CAN FIT
MY FINGER IN THE
TRIGGER GUARD...



SOMETHING
...TO
KEEP AN
OLD MAN
AWAKE...

...AND
SOMETHING
ELSE...



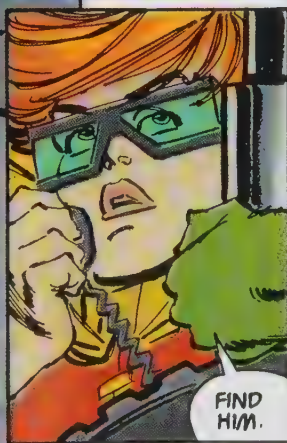
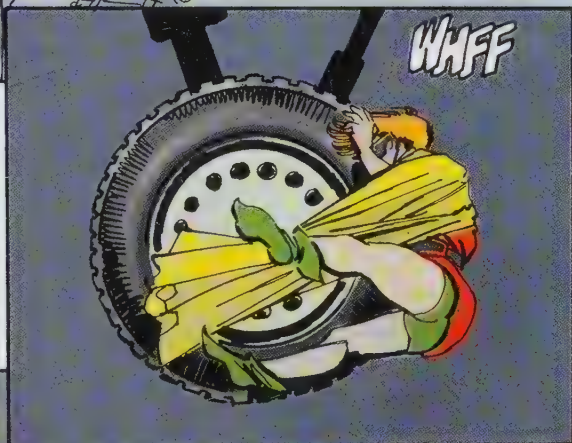
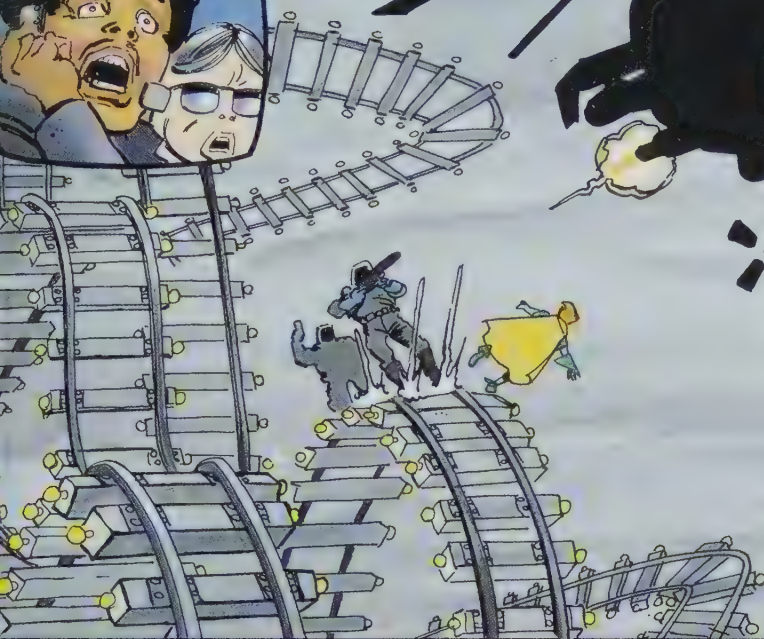
...TO BRING
THE HOUSE
DOWN...

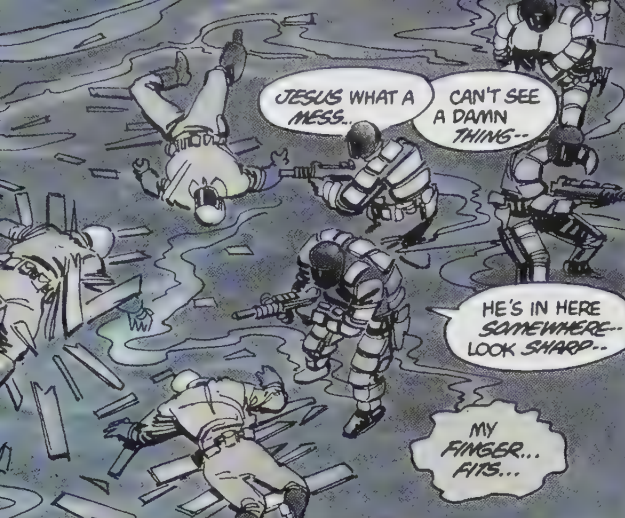
...HE SEEMS CONFIDENT
WHAT THE-- THAT'S
NOT ONE OF OURS--
COMING RIGHT AT US--
BANK, YOU IDIOT--
BANK--

WHUP WHUP WHUP

BRAKABRAKABRAKA

WHUP WHUP WHUP



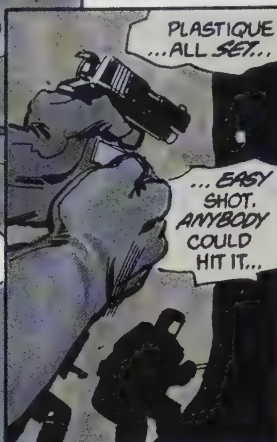


JESUS WHAT A MESS...

CAN'T SEE A DAMN THING--

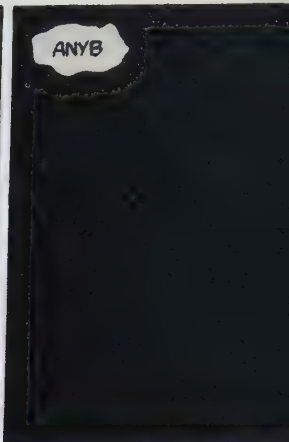
HE'S IN HERE SOMEWHERE--
LOOK SHARP--

MY FINGER...
FITS...



PLASTIQUE ... ALL SET...

... EASY SHOT. ANYBODY COULD HIT IT...



ANYB



ODY...

BLAM



SPAKK

CLUMSY... STUPID...
SENILE...



THERE--
SHOOT TO KILL--

DODDERING...
HELPLESS...



BLAM



...LUCKY--

--THE PLASTIQUE GOES UP--

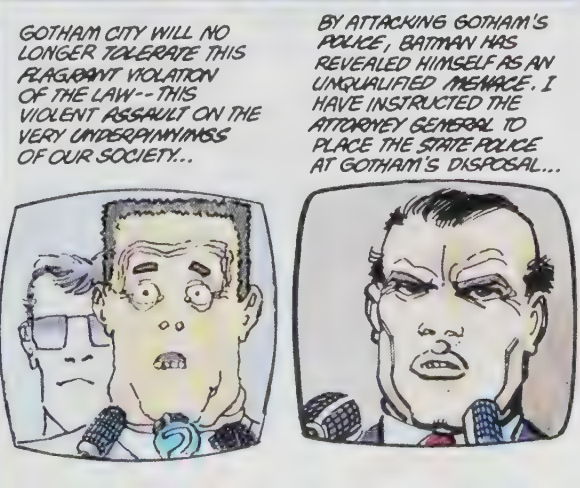
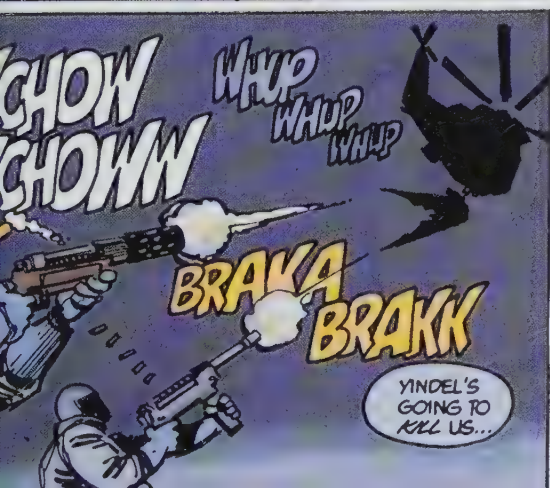
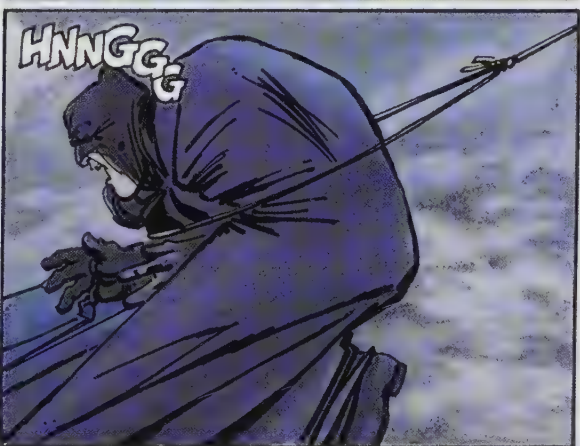
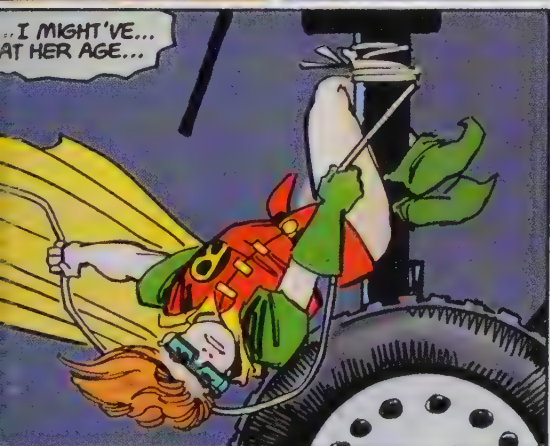
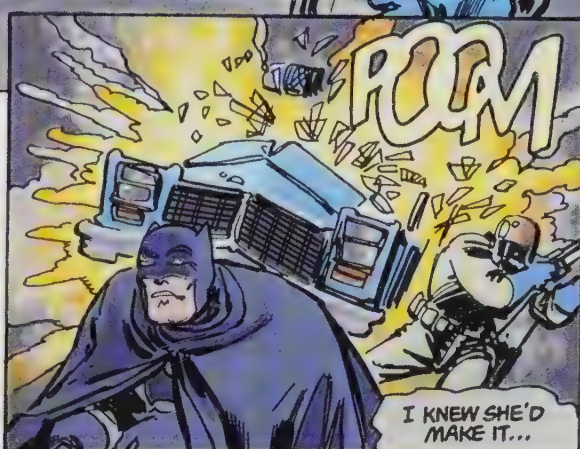
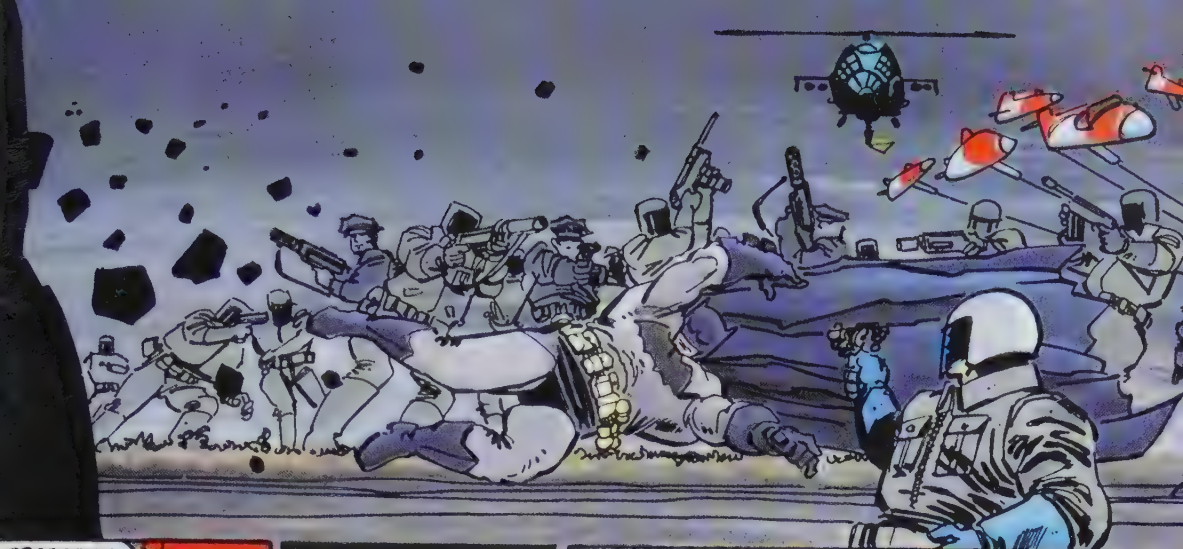
--MY HEART--
ONLY SKIPS--
ONE BEAT...

...LUCKY...

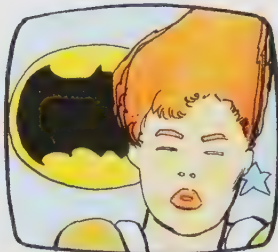
...THE ROOF LANDS ON THE SWAT TEAM...

...LUCKY OLD MAN...





...THE JOKER'S BODY
FOUND MUTILATED AND
BURNED... MURDER IS
ADDED TO THE CHARGES
AGAINST THE
BATMAN...



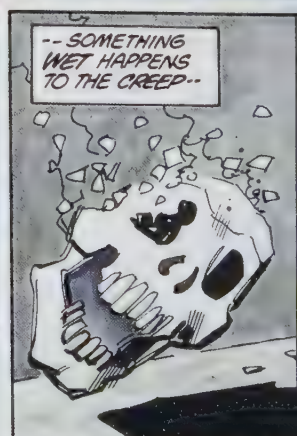
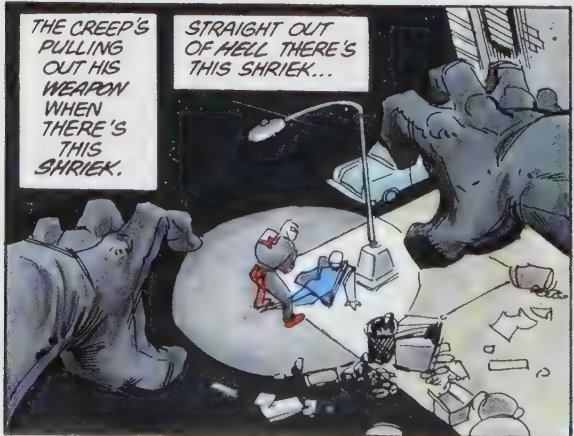
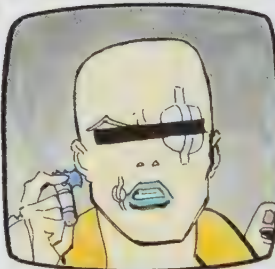
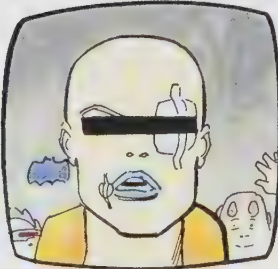
YOU CAN SAY WHAT
YOU WANT. YOU CAN
CALL HIM WHAT YOU
WANT. YOU DON'T
HAVE TO WALK
DOWN AVENUE D AT
NIGHT.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO HEAR
THE SUCKING SOUNDS
THEY MAKE EVERY TIME
YOU WALK BY. THIS ONE.
HE'D BEEN WORKING THE
NERVE UP FOR WEEKS
BEFORE HE WAS HORNY
ENOUGH...

...NO, HORNY HE WASN'T.
HE WAS JUST LOOKING
TO HURT SOMEBODY
AND HE'S THE KIND WHO
HURTS WOMEN. I WISH
THEY WERE RARE. HE
GAVE HIMSELF AN
EXCUSE...



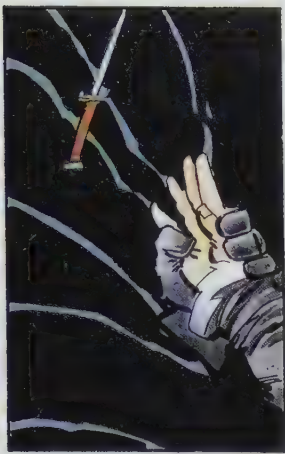
SO NOW HE'S GIGGLING
LIKE HE'S TURNED ON!
I FIGURE HE'S SERIOUS
ENOUGH TO RUN AFTER
ME. I GO FOR THE
FACE.





--A SIDE OF BEEF SLAMS INTO THE LAMPOST--

--A SWITCHBLADE SNAPS OPEN--



BONES START POPPING INSIDE THE CREEP-- HE'S SCREAMING AND BEGGING--

--WHAT GRABBED HIM IS LAUGHING AND SO AM I...

AND THE MAN WHO ASSAULTED YOU?

STILL IN THE HOSPITAL.



HE'S OLD, HE'S ALMOST DEAD...



SUTURE.



HE'S GOING TO BE OKAY, RIGHT?

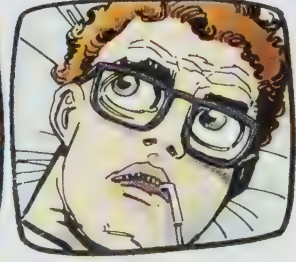
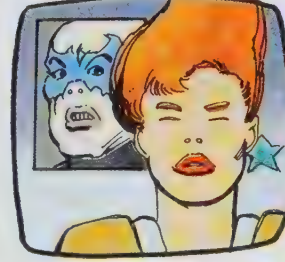
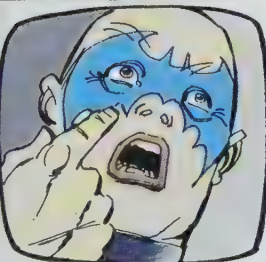
HE'LL LIVE...

DO NOT EXPECT ANY FURTHER STATEMENTS. THE SONS OF THE BATMAN DO NOT TALK. WE ACT. LET GOTHAM'S CRIMINALS BEWARE. THEY ARE ABOUT TO ENTER HELL.

THE MUTANTS ARE DEAD. THE MUTANTS ARE HISTORY. THIS IS THE MARK OF THE FUTURE. GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO THE BATMAN.

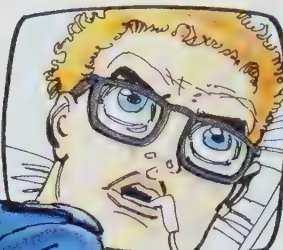
... THE SONS OF THE BATMAN HAVE STRUCK AGAIN. JEFF STRICKEN WAS CLOSING UP THE SOUTH STREET 7-11 WHEN HE BECAME BOTH WITNESS-- AND VICTIM...

THEY'RE YOUNGER THAN YOU'D THINK--THIS ONE WAS, ANYWAY. COULDN'T HAVE BEEN OLDER THAN SIXTEEN... THAT'S RIGHT, THERE WAS JUST ONE OF THEM...

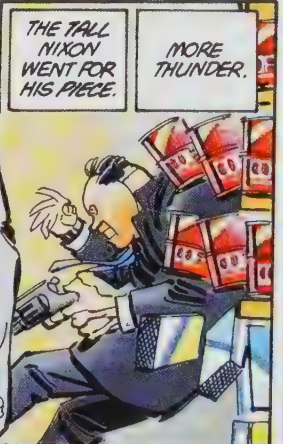




...BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF. IT ALL STARTED WHEN THREE NIXONS CAME INTO THE STORE. WHAT?... NO, I DID NOT GO FOR THE ALARM. THEY DON'T PAY ME ENOUGH FOR SUICIDE.

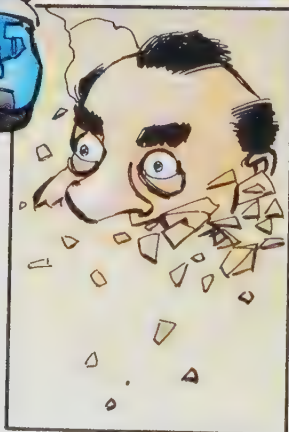


I'D HAVE LOVED TO HAVE WARNED HIM.



THE TALL NIXON WENT FOR HIS PIECE.

MORE THUNDER.



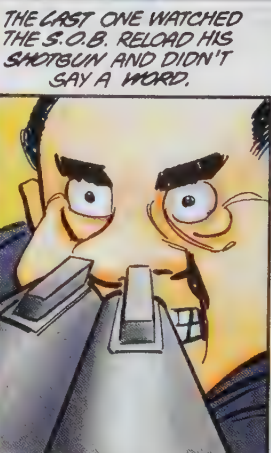
I WAS CLEARING OUT THE REGISTER WHEN THAT OFF-DUTY COP CAME UP FROM THE BACK.

HE ONLY SAW TWO OF THE NIXONS.



THE COP WAS STILL TWITCHING WHEN THEY HEADED FOR THE DOOR.

I HEARD A THUNDERCLAP.

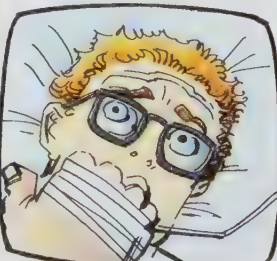


THE LAST ONE WATCHED THE S.O.B. RELOAD HIS SHOTGUN AND DIDN'T SAY A WORD.



THEN THE S.O.B., HE TOLD ME I SHOULD'VE PUT UP A FIGHT WITH THE NIXONS. SAID I DIDN'T DESERVE TO RUN A CASH REGISTER. HE GRABBED A PAIR OF WIRE CUTTERS --

THE NIXONS ARE THE NEWEST SPLINTER GROUP OF THE MUTANT ARMY, WHICH EXPERTS BELIEVE DISBANDED WHEN THE BATMAN DEFEATED THEIR LEADER. TOM?



THANK YOU, LOLA. STILL HELD AT GOTHAM JAIL ARE EIGHTY-SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE MUTANT GANG, WHO WERE CAPTURED BY BATMAN.

COMMISSIONER YINDEL HAS REQUESTED THAT THEY BE MOVED TO THE STATE PENITENTIARY, WHILE THEY AWAIT TRIAL...

NO--NO TROUBLE, COMMISSIONER...THEY'RE STILL JUST WATCHING TV...



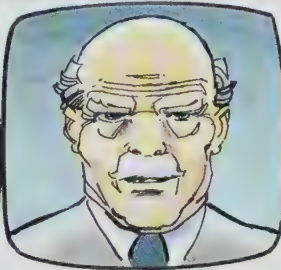
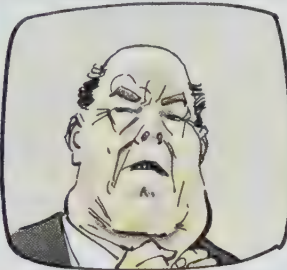
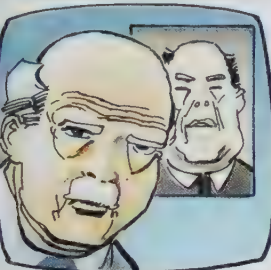
YINDEL'S REQUEST WAS CUT SHORT BY A COURT ORDER, ACQUIRED BY THE MUTANTS' ATTORNEY...

MY CLIENTS ARE YOUNG PEOPLE--MINORS, MOST OF THEM. IF THERE ISN'T ROOM IN THE JAIL, THEY SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE CARE OF THEIR PARENTS.

FOLLOWING THE ATTORNEY'S STATEMENT, A PETITION SIGNED BY SEVENTY-ONE OF THE MUTANTS' PARENTS, URGED THE MAYOR NOT TO RELEASE--

WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST FOR A NEWS TWO SPECIAL REPORT

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

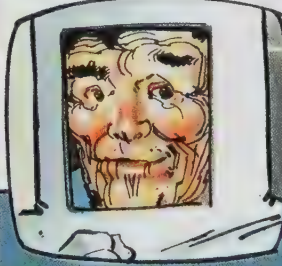
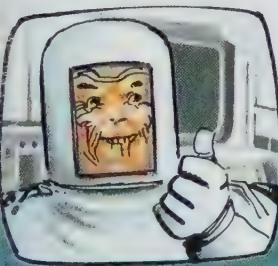


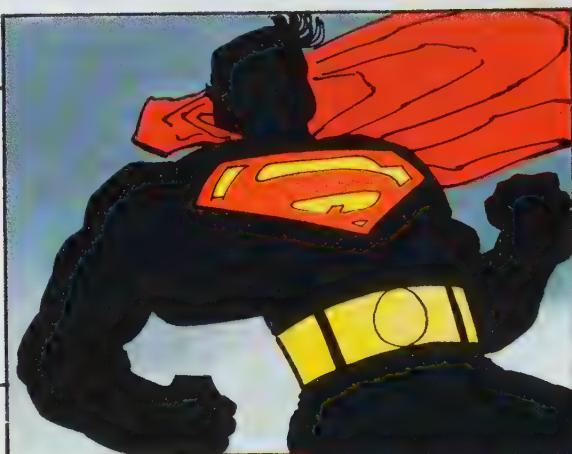
WELL, FOLKS, I'VE GOT SOME GOOD NEWS-- AND SOME BAD NEWS... HEN... THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE WITHDRAWN THEIR FORCES FROM THE ISLAND OF CORTO MALTESE...



SOMETHING WRONGS, KENT?

...AND THE BAD NEWS, WELL... IT LOOKS LIKE THOSE SOVIETS ARE PRETTY BAD LOSERS, YES, THEY ARE...





TWENTY
MILLION
DIE BY
FIRE...

...IF I
AM WEAK...



I COULD BE SITTING AT HOME
CATCHING UP ON MY READING--
YES, SOME OF US STILL READ--
IF NOT FOR SARAH AND THE ONE
MORE THING SHE ALWAYS NEEDS
FROM THE GROCERY STORE.

THIS TIME IT'S BEANS.
VEGETARIAN BEANS. TOOK
ME TEN MINUTES TO FIGURE
OUT THAT IT ISN'T IN THE
HEALTH FOOD SECTION. IT'S
JUST BEANS WITHOUT MEAT.

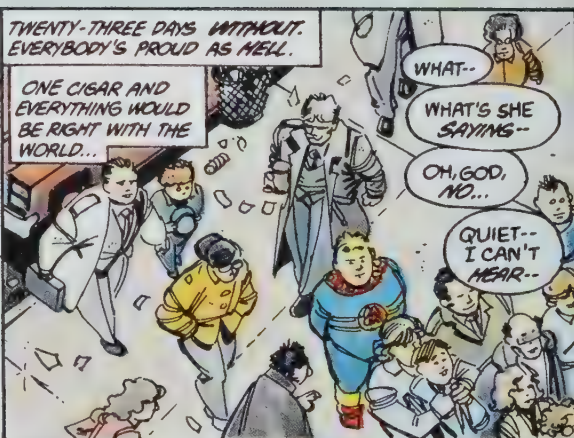
TEN MINUTES
OF MY LIFE.



I NEED A
CIGAR.

TWENTY-THREE DAYS WITHOUT.
EVERYBODY'S PROUD AS WELL.

ONE CIGAR AND
EVERYTHING WOULD
BE RIGHT WITH THE
WORLD...



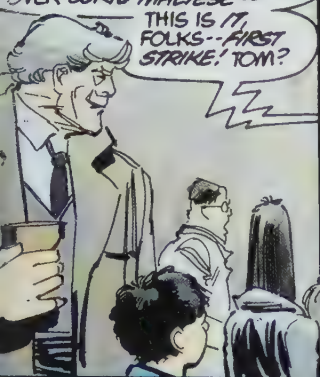
WHAT--

WHAT'S SHE
SAYING--

OH, GOD,
NO...

QUIET--
I CAN'T
HEAR--

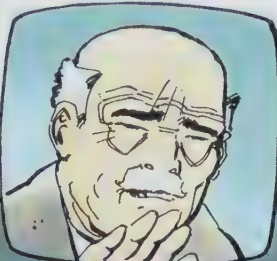
A SOVIET NUCLEAR WARHEAD--
SECONDS FROM DETONATION
OVER CORTO MALTESE--
THIS IS IT,
FOLKS--FIRST
STRIKE! TOM?



LOLA CHONG
GIVES GOOD NEWS



CAREFUL--BE CAREFUL
HOW YOU PUT THINGS, LOLA.
THIS IS ONE MISSILE--
THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS
THAT THIS IS PART OF A
FULL-SCALE ATTACK...



TELL THAT TO
THE AMERICAN
TROOPS STATIONED
THERE, TOM.



HOLD IT... WE'VE JUST
GOTTEN WORD THAT IT'S
NOT A CONVENTIONAL
NUCLEAR WARHEAD--WE
SWITCH YOU NOW TO DAN
MUSK, ABOARD THE NEWS
TWO SHUTTLE. WHAT'S
THE WORD, DAN?



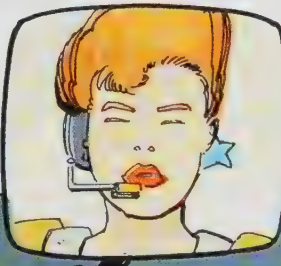
STILL COLLATING, LOLA--
BUT IT'S A BIG ONE--
HEAVY MEGATONNAGE--
WITH UNUSUAL COMPUTER
ACTIVITY--WE CAN'T BE
CERTAIN OF ITS CAPABIL-
ITIES...



...AT THE VERY LEAST,
CORTO WILL BE LEVELED--
THE FIRES MIGHT
SPREAD TO MAINLAND
SOUTH AMERICA--
SHOULD IT GENERATE A
SUFFICIENT MAGNETIC
PULSE, THERE MIGHT--

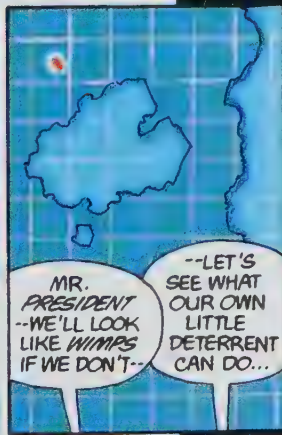


THANKS FOR THE DATA,
DAN, BUT WE'LL ALL
KNOW SOON ENOUGH
WHAT IT CAN DO. RIGHT
NOW, WE'VE GOT
AUTHOR HARLAN
ELLISON IN THE STUDIO...



MR.
PRESIDENT
--GIVE THE
WORD--

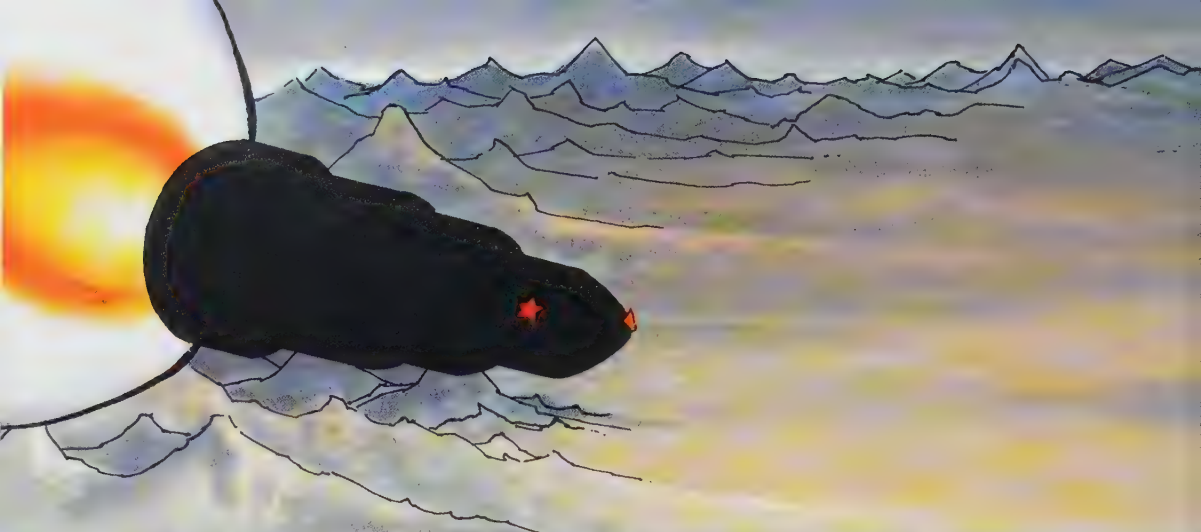
NOW YOU
JUST
KEEP YOUR
SHIRT
ON,
LUCIUS...



MR.
PRESIDENT
--WE'LL LOOK
LIKE WIMPS
IF WE DON'T--

--LET'S
SEE WHAT
OUR OWN
LITTLE
DETERRENT
CAN DO...





... BE EATING OUR OWN BABIES FOR BREAKFAST.

THANK YOU, MR. ELLISON... YES, DAN??...

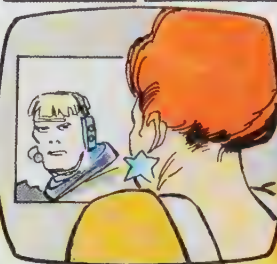
LOLA--IF IT GENERATES A PULSE OF SUFFICIENT INTENSITY, IT COULD--

DAN-- WE'VE FINISHED OUR TECHNICAL SEGMENT...

--IT COULD DISRUPT THE MAGNETIC FIELD CAUSING--

COMING UP-- VIEWER OPINIONS ...

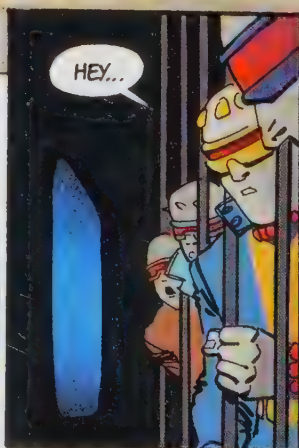
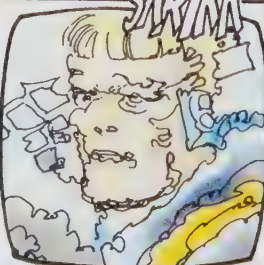
LOLA-- THIS IS INCREDIBLE--TRAJECTORY CHANGE-- TWENTY DEGREES DUE EAST--THE WARHEAD HAS CHANGED COURSE--



YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST-- THE WARHEAD HAS SOMEHOW BEEN DIVERTED-- IT WILL EXPLODE HARMLESSLY IN-- WHAT'S THE NAME OF THAT DESERT??...

IT MIGHT NOT BE HARMLESS, LOLA--IF THAT PULSE IS STRONG ENOUGH, IT COULD DISRUPT ALL ELECTRICAL

SPARK



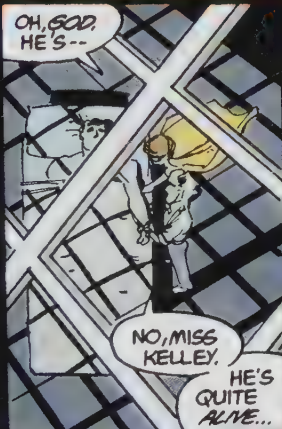
HEY...



WHAT THE DEVIL...



OH, GOD.
HE'S--



NO, MISS
KELLEY.

HE'S
QUITE
ALIVE...

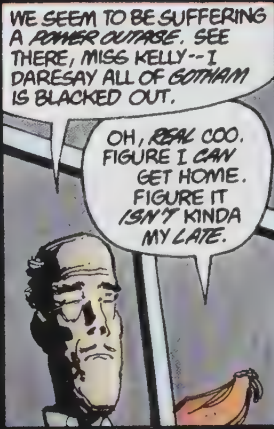
--BETTER GET
THAT TV
WORKING,
MAN--

SHUT UP...



WE SEEM TO BE SUFFERING
A POWER OUTAGE. SEE
THERE, MISS KELLY--I
DARESAY ALL OF GOTHAM
IS BLACKED OUT.

OH, REAL COO.
FIGURE I CAN
GET HOME.
FIGURE IT
ISN'T KINDA
MY LATE.



MY WATCH
STOPPED,
ACES. LIKE
I DIDN'T
JUST
BUY
IT...

HMF. BLOODY
ELECTRONICS.
HERE NOW--
IT'S HALF
ELEVEN.



CLARK,
YOU
IDiot.



YOU LET
THEM
DO IT.



I ALWAYS
KNEW YOU
WOULD.

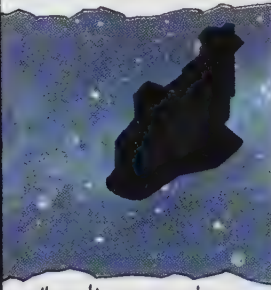


MAYBE DURING A BREAK BETWEEN POLICE ACTIONS, ONE OF YOUR MILITARY FRIENDS TOLD YOU WHAT AN ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE IS. AND MAYBE YOU LISTENED, CLARK.

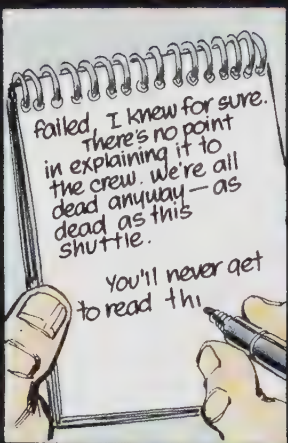
ALL YOU NEED TO GENERATE THE PULSE IS THE ORGANIZED DETONATION OF A FEW DOZEN NUCLEAR WARHEADS.

THAT, OR A SPECIAL KIND OF NUKE THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DEVELOP...

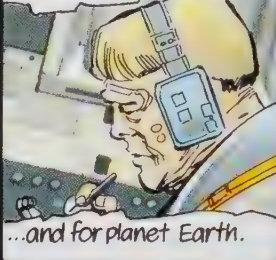
Sweetheart,
The last of the readings gave a hint of what would happen.



When the computer failed, I knew for sure.



you'll never get to read this letter. it'll burn up with me when our orbit deteriorates. still, my last thoughts will be a prayer for you, for humanity...



...and for planet Earth.

Nothing could stop the Russians from emptying their silos at us now. We'd have no defense, no way to retaliate.

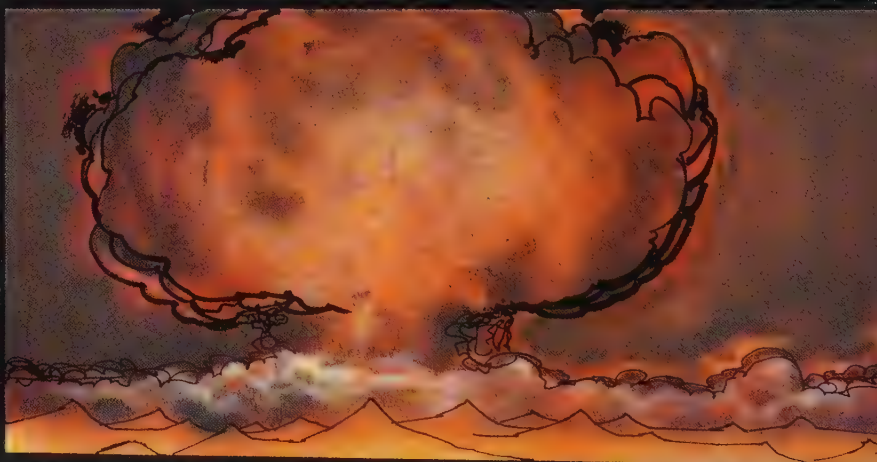


The one hope we have is that the decision to murder billions has to be made by a human being.

...YES, CLARK. BOTH SIDES.

THE AMERICAN NAME FOR IT IS COLDSPRINGER. IT'S DESIGNED TO CAUSE MAXIMUM DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT-- ALL THE WHILE SPARRING THE INDUSTRIAL SITES YOUR FRIENDS REGARD SO HIGHLY.

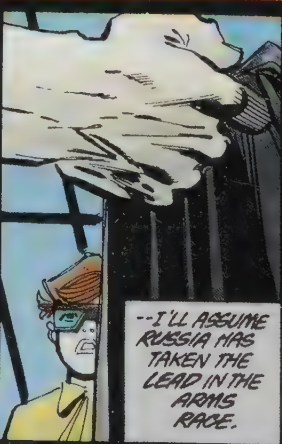
SINCE MY OWN ATOMS AREN'T BOUNCING AROUND THE STRATOSPHERE--



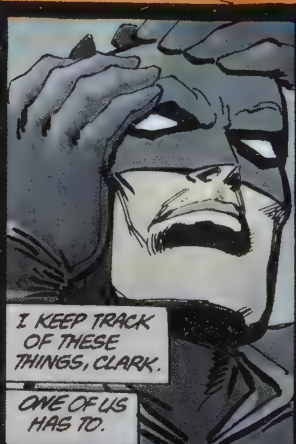
--SINCE GOTHAM CITY SQUATS LIKE A GREAT BLACK GRAVEYARD--



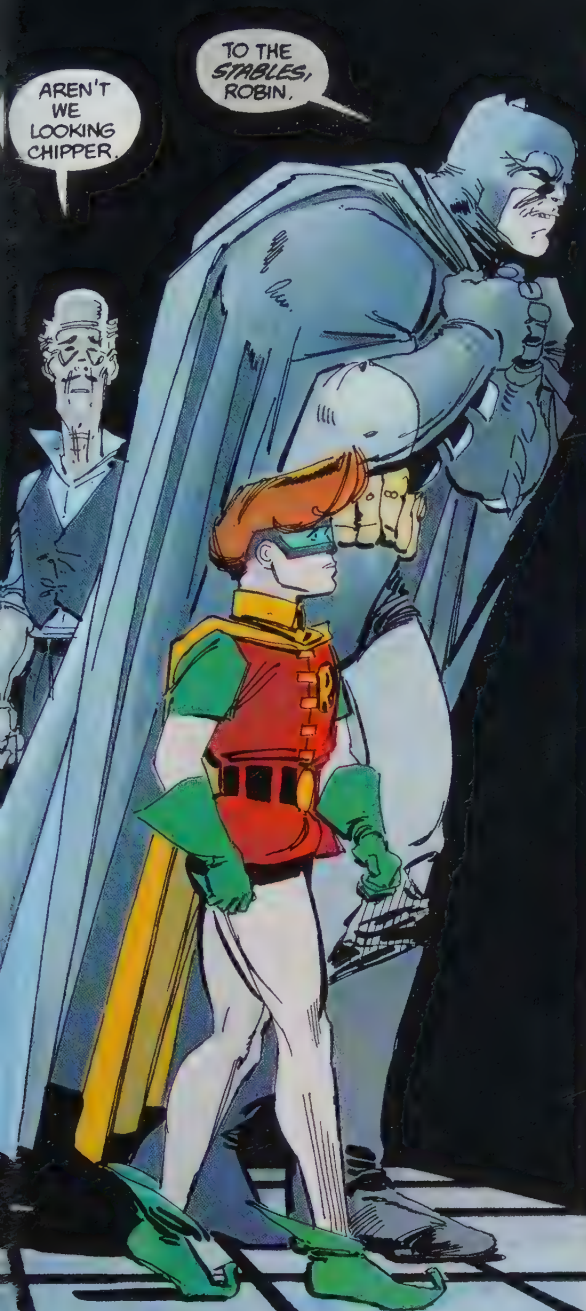
-- SINCE WAYNE MANOR'S EMERGENCY GENERATOR HASN'T KICKED IN-- AND ROBIN'S WATCH HAS STOPPED.



--I'LL ASSUME RUSSIA HAS TAKEN THE LEAD IN THE ARMS RACE.



I KEEP TRACK OF THESE THINGS, CLARK.
ONE OF US HAS TO.



AREN'T WE LOOKING CHIPPER.

TO THE STABLES, ROBIN.



MURRAY--THEY'RE CHANTING--GET DOWN THERE--

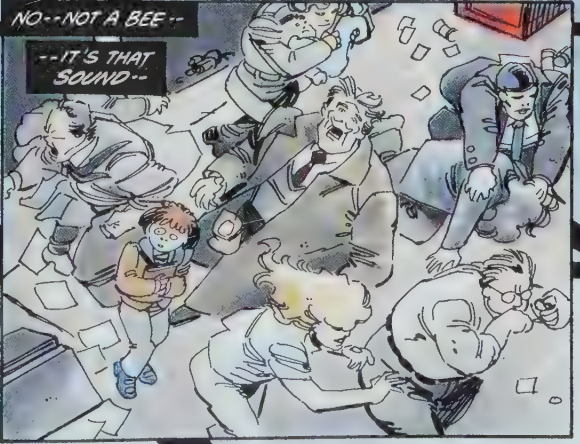


EVER RIDE A HORSE, ROBIN?

NEVER EVEN SAW ONE...

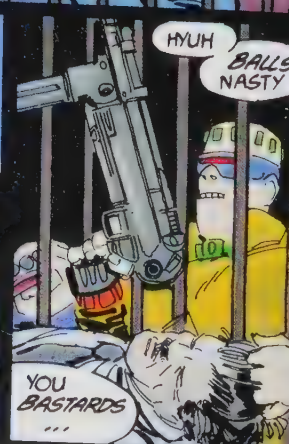
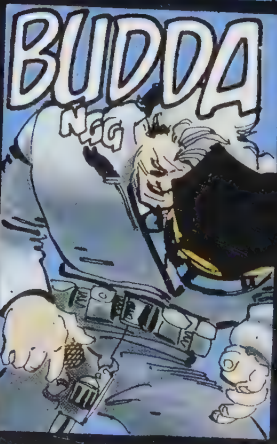
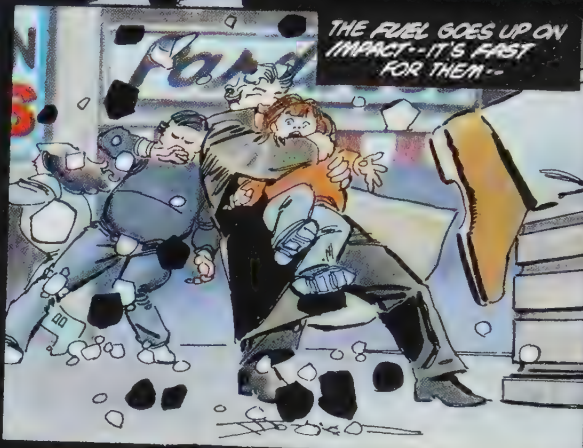
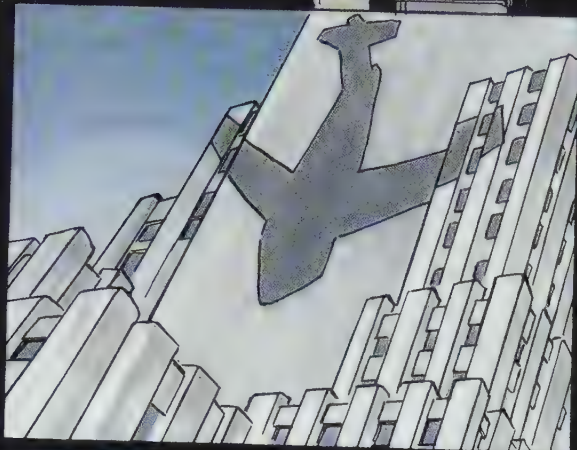


I'M TELLING MYSELF IT'S ONLY A BLACKOUT WHEN A BEE FLIES IN MY EAR.



NO--NOT A BEE--

--IT'S THAT SOUND--





THE
DUMP.

IT'S A BREEDING
GROUND FOR
INSECTS AND
RODENTS.

SOME
RODENTS
FLY.

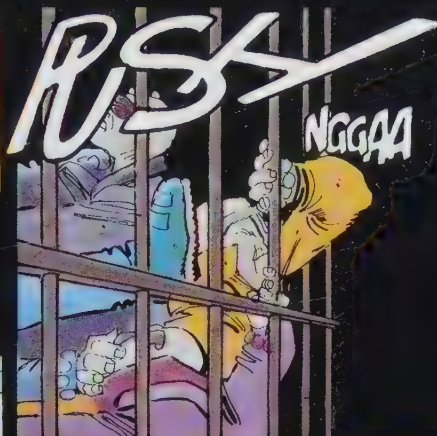


THE WIND PICKS UP,
SPREADING THE FLAMES
ACROSS THE WEST
SIDE-- TOWARD MY
HOME--TOWARD--



--TOWARD SARAH.

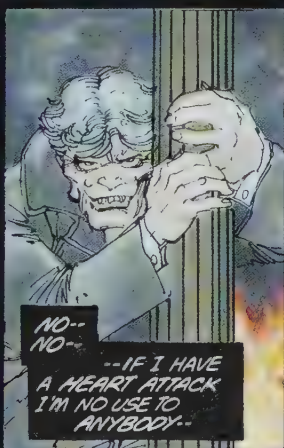
JESUS CHRIST
ALMIGHTY SARAH--



NGGAA



KKKREEEEEE



NO--
NO--

--IF I HAVE
A HEART ATTACK
I'M NO USE TO
ANYBODY--



-- NO. I'M ALL
RIGHT.

I'M ALL
RIGHT.



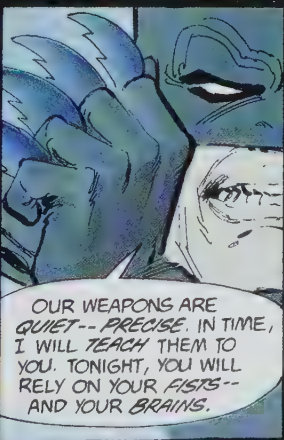
ONLY FEELS LIKE THERE'S
A STORM COMING.

IT'S JUST
HIS VOICE...

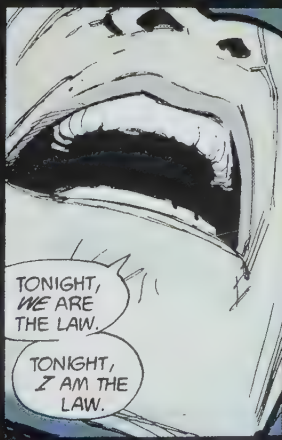
THIS
LOUD, CLUMSY,
STUPID
THING--



THIS IS THE
WEAPON OF
THE ENEMY.
WE DO NOT
NEED IT. WE WILL
NOT USE IT.



OUR WEAPONS ARE
QUIET-- PRECISE. IN TIME,
I WILL TEACH THEM TO
YOU. TONIGHT, YOU WILL
RELY ON YOUR FISTS--
AND YOUR BRAINS.



TONIGHT,
WE ARE
THE LAW.

TONIGHT,
I AM THE
LAW.



LET'S
RIDE.

JUST HIS
VOICE.

JUST
HIM.



EEEEKKRKKKK

ALL RUNNING AWAY-- LOOKS
BAD-- -- I'M CRYING
BUT IT'S JUST
THE SMOKE--

KK

DOWN
THERE--

SOMETHING
EXPLODES--



-- SMOKE--
DOESN'T IT
FIGURE--



COPS--

AIN'T
FAN--

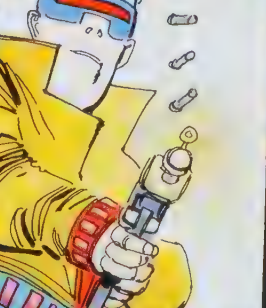
DON'T
SHIV--



-- RIGHT ON
MY BLOCK--

-- A GAS
MAIN--

BUDDA





--GOD ANYTHING
IN THERE IS AS
GOOD AS--

--DAMN THAT
SMOKE--

--CAN'T SEE HER-- CAN'T
TELL IF SHE'S ALIVE OR--

--I'M RUNNING AROUND WITH
ALL THE OTHER HEADLESS
CHICKENS-- THAT'S NO DAMN
GOOD--



--I START YELLING
ORDERS--

--SOME OLD WOMAN
LAUGHS AT ME--



WHOLE CITY
BLACKED
OUT--

RAD

BALLS
RAD--

IT'S
OUR
NIGHT--

SLICE AN
DICE MAN--

SLICE
AN DICE--



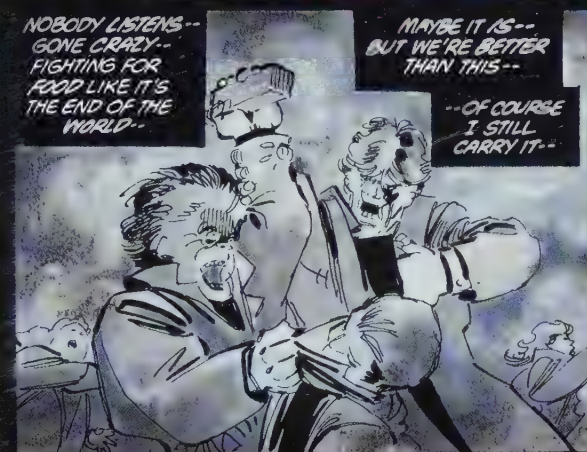
YOU HEAR
HORSES?

WH

YOU KNOW
--LIKE IN A
WESTERN--

EYES
SLIDENAYS,
SPUD--

THERE--



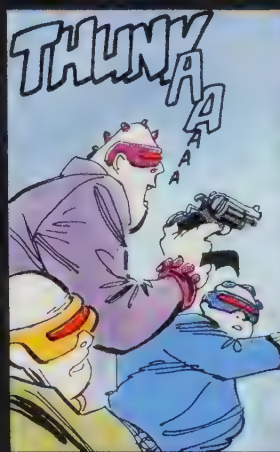
NBODY LISTENS--
GONE CRAZY--
FIGHTING FOR
FOOD LIKE IT'S
THE END OF THE
WORLD--

MAYBE IT IS--
BUT WE'RE BETTER
THAN THIS--

--OF COURSE
I STILL
CARRY IT--



--THEY
START
LISTENING--



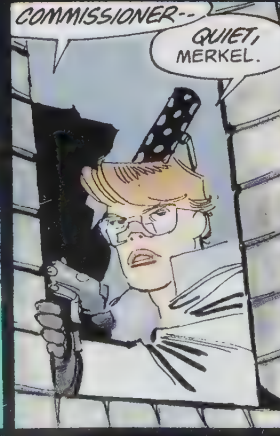
THUNK
A
A
A



THUNK
W
W
W



THUNK
THUNK
THUNK



COMMISSIONER--

QUIET,
MERKEL.



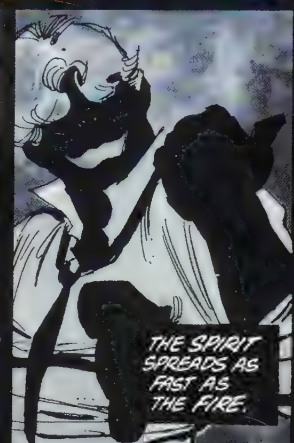
BOYS,
GIRLS... ... I'M HERE
TO APPEAL
TO YOUR
COMMUNITY
SPIRIT.



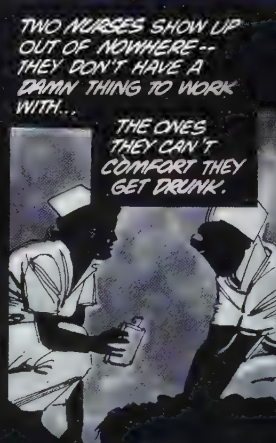
I'M SURE YOU'RE
ALL EAGER
TO HELP.



COMMISSIONER,
WE -- NO. NO.
HE'S...
TOO BIG...

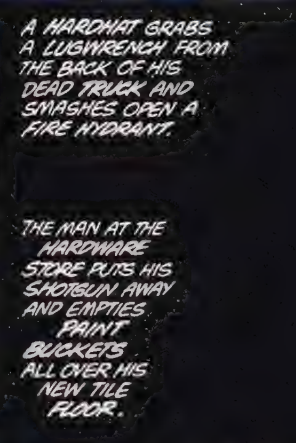


THE SPIRIT
SPREADS AS
FAST AS
THE FIRE.



TWO NURSES SHOW UP
OUT OF NOWHERE --
THEY DON'T HAVE A
DAMN THING TO WORK
WITH...

THE ONES
THEY CAN'T
COMFORT THEY
GET DRUNK.

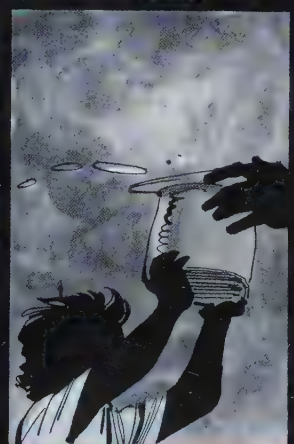


A HARDHAT GRABS
A LUGWRENCH FROM
THE BACK OF HIS
DEAD TRUCK AND
SMASHES OPEN A
FIRE HYDRANT.

THE MAN AT THE
HARDWARE
STORE PUTS HIS
SHOTGUN AWAY
AND EMPTIES
PAINT
BUCKETS
ALL OVER HIS
NEW TILE
FLOOR.

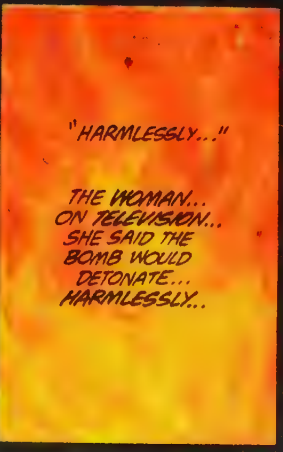


A LINE
FORMS.



PULSE
IS STEADY,
NO
PROBLEM.

NO
SIGN
OF
GARAN.



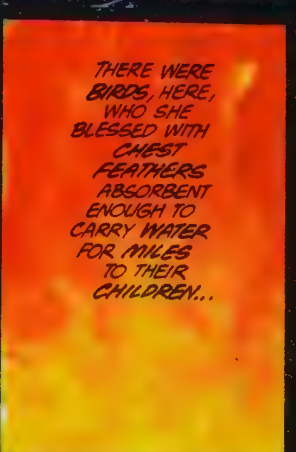
"HARMLESSLY..."

THE WOMAN...
ON TELEVISION...
SHE SAID THE
BOMB WOULD
DETONATE...
HARMLESSLY...



YOU CANNOT
TOUCH MY
PLANET WITHOUT
DESTROYING
SOMETHING
PRECIOUS.

EVEN HER
DESERTS
ARE
ABUNDANT.



THERE WERE
BIRDS, HERE,
WHO SHE
BLESSED WITH
CHEST
FEATHERS
ABSORBENT
ENOUGH TO
CARRY WATER
FOR MILES
TO THEIR
CHILDREN...

...BULLFROSS,
WHO SLEPT
FOR YEARS IN
DRIED-OUT
RIVERBEDS...
THEN DUG
THEIR WAY
TO THE
SURFACE
WHEN THE
RAINS
CAME...

NOW...
THERE IS
ONLY
BLACKENED
GLASS...

...ENDLESS
FLAME...

OUR
PEOPLE,
BRUCE.
YOU
LAUGH
AT
THEM.

THEY
CAN DO
THIS...
AND YOU
LAUGH...



...THEY CAN SPLIT
THE VERY FABRIC
OF REALITY...
BLAST A HUNDRED
THOUSAND TONS
OF SAND INTO
THE SKY...

...BLOTTING OUT
THE SOURCE OF
ALL MY POWER...
THE HOPE
FOR SCREAMING
MILLIONS...

MAGNETIC STORM
...YOU HAVE
EVERY REASON
TO BE OUTRAGED,
MOTHER EARTH...
YOU HAVE GIVEN
THEM...
EVERYTHING...

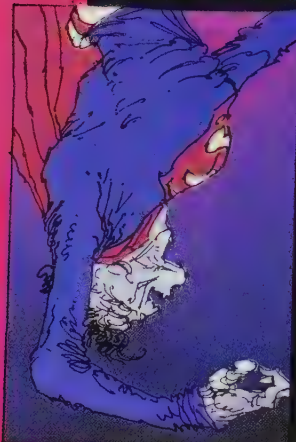
THEY ARE TINY AND
STUPID AND VICIOUS
...BUT PLEASE...
LISTEN TO THEM...

PLEASE... I AM
SLOW AND
DYING...



I NEED
ONLY...
REACH
THE SUN...





I HAVE
ALWAYS
LOVED
YOU...

THOUGH I WAS BORN A
GALAXY AWAY...

...I HAVE
ALWAYS
SERVED
YOU...

THE SAME
POWER...
THE SUN'S
POWER...



...FUELS
US
BOTH...

YOU HOLD IT...
HERE... YOU
STORE IT...



I BEG
YOU... FOR A
SUFFERING
WORLD...
RELEASE IT...

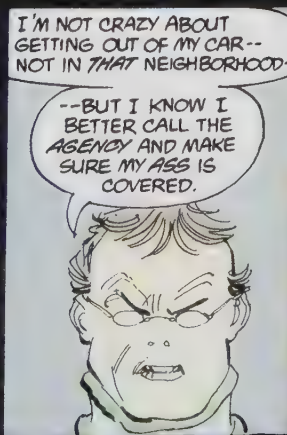
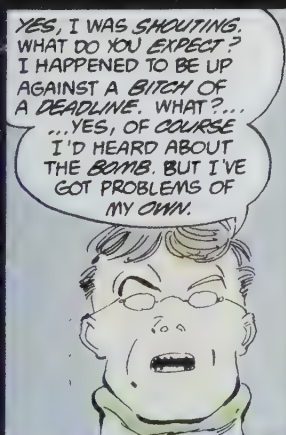
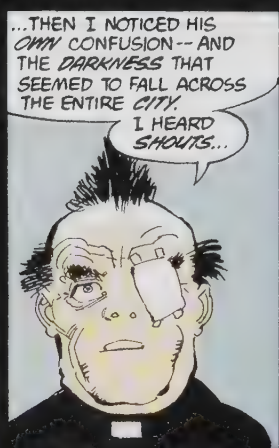
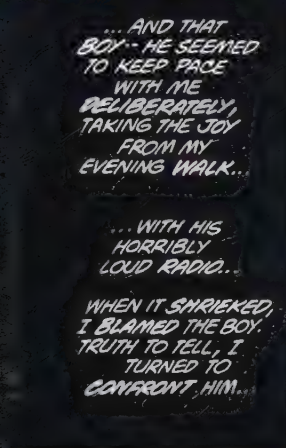
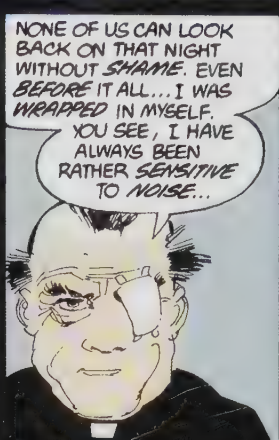
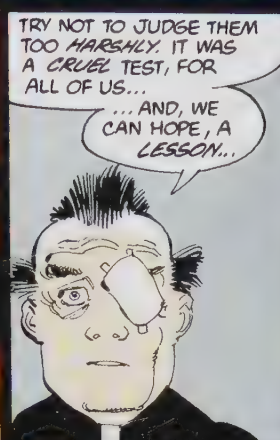
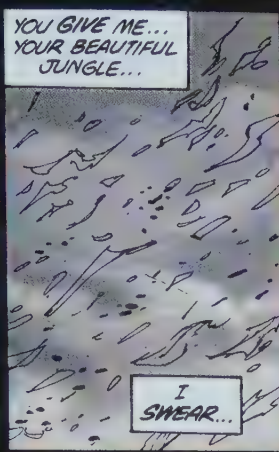
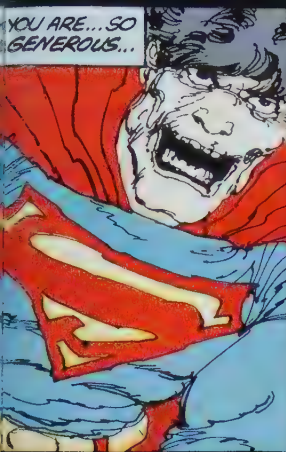


MOTHER...



MOTHER...





I'M BARELY
ON MY FEET
WHEN THAT GIRL
IS ALL OVER
ME, TALKING
ABOUT WORLD
WAR THREE.

I DON'T LIKE
BEING TOUCHED
--AND LIKE I
SAID, I'VE GOT
MY OWN
PROBLEMS--

--BUT SHE
WON'T SHUT
UP--



GUESS I JUST LOST
CONTROL. I... I'D BEEN
HAVING NIGHTMARES
ABOUT THE BOMB...
READ UP ON IT A LOT...

...AND WHEN THE
LIGHTS WENT OUT...



...WELL, I KNEW IT HAD TO
BE THE ELECTROMAGNETIC
PULSE... AND ALL THE
BOOKS SAY THAT'D
ONLY HAPPEN DURING
A FULL-SCALE EXCHANGE...

...AND WHEN I
HEARD THAT
EXPLOSION...



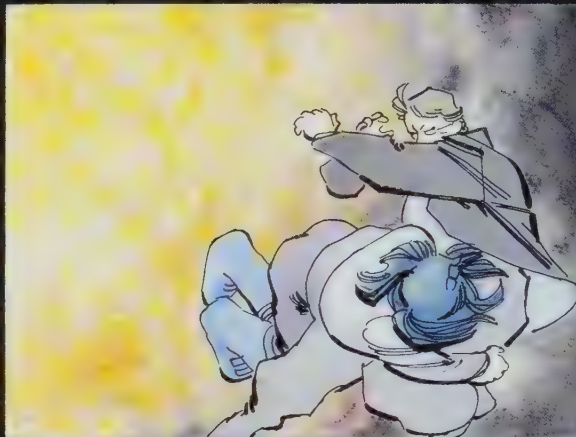
...I MEAN, LATER I
FOUND OUT IT WAS A
JET, CRASHING INTO
THE BRISHAM BUILDING...

...I GUESS WE
WERE LUCKY IT
WAS THE ONLY
PLANE TO FALL
ON GOTHAM...



...BUT JUST THEN, I... I
MEAN NOT KNOWING...
BUT... IT WAS DUMB,
BUT WHEN I HEARD
THE EXPLOSION, I
THOUGHT...

...AND WHEN
THE CARS STARTED
GOING UP...



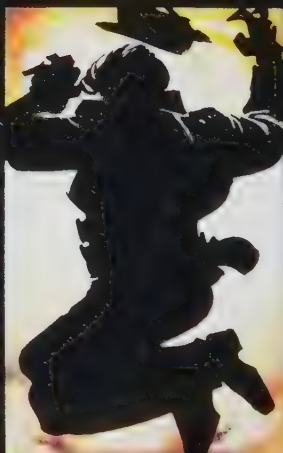
NOBODY TOLD ME ABOUT
ANY AIRPLANE. THE CARS
WERE POPPING OFF LIKE
FIRECRACKERS--
EVERYBODY SCREAMING--

--IT WAS EVERY
MAN FOR
HIMSELF.



OH, RIGHT. THE COP.
LISTEN, I'VE NEVER
BROKEN THE LAW--NOT
IN ANY WAY THAT COUNTS.

AND IT WASN'T ME WHO
TOLD HIM TO TRY TO
HELP THAT STAP BITCH
OUT OF HER
VOLKSWAGEN.



GROW UP. SOMEBODY
WAS GOING TO GET HIS
GUN. HE SURE DIDN'T
HAVE ANY USE FOR IT.

THAT PRIEST,
HE DIDN'T SEE
IT MY WAY...



HE WOULDN'T LET GO.
WOULDN'T LISTEN TO
REASON. I'VE BEEN TO
CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY
SINCE I WAS A KID.
BUT WHEN PUSH COMES
TO SHOVE...



HEY--YOU WEREN'T *THERE*.
COULD BARELY *SEE*
THROUGH ALL THE *SMOKE*--
--WAS *SURE* I HEARD
SHELLING.

IT WAS THE END OF
THE *WORLD*-- AND
I HAD A *SON*--



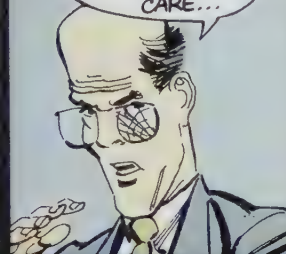
WOULDN'T TAKE A
GENIUS TO REALIZE THAT
THE ONLY OTHER THING
WORTH A *DAMN* WAS
FOOD.

I WASN'T
ALONE,
EITHER.



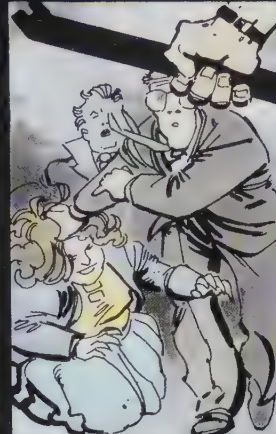
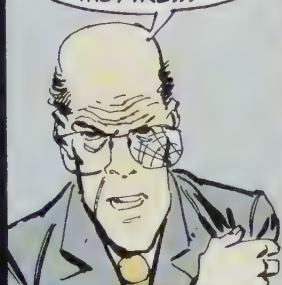
THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR
WHAT WE DID. WE WEREN'T
CRAZY. WE WERE JUST
AN UGLY BUNCH OF STUPID,
SELFISH *BASTARDS*.

THERE WAS THE
PRIEST, A BLOODY
MESS. I DIDN'T
CARE...



...NO EXCUSE... I WAS IN
WITH THE *REST* OF THEM,
SHOVING, YELLING ABOUT
FOOD AND *GUNS*...

THERE WAS NO *PLAN*,
NOBODY FIGHTING
THE *FIRE*...



FIRES ARE FOR THE
FIRE DEPARTMENT. THAT'S
WHY I PAY MY *TAKES*. WE
HAD *OURSELVES* TO LOOK
AFTER.

WE WERE HEADING
EAST ON *CHELSEA*--
HIT THE *GRAND*
UNION PARKING
LOT...



... WHEN WE RAN INTO
ANOTHER CROWD THAT'D
GOTTEN THE SAME *IDEA*.
LOOKED LIKE THEY
CLEANED THE WHOLE
STARE OUT--

--AND WANTED IT ALL
FOR *THEMSELVES*.



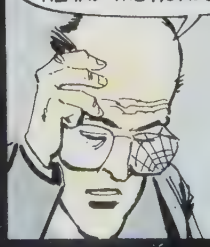
ONE OF THEM MADE A
MOVE FOR THE *GUN*. HE
WAS *BLACK*-- I'M NO
RACIST, BUT I THOUGHT
HE MIGHT HAVE A *KNIFE*.

I DID WHAT
ANYBODY
WOULD'VE.



I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT
GOT AS BAD AS IT DID.
YOU'D NEVER HAVE
KNOWN THAT JUST A FEW
MINUTES *EARLIER* WE'D
BEEN...

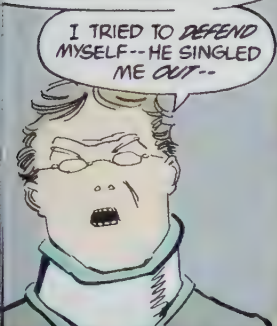
...I WAS *STRANGLING*
SOMEBODY WHEN I
HEARD THE *HORSES*...



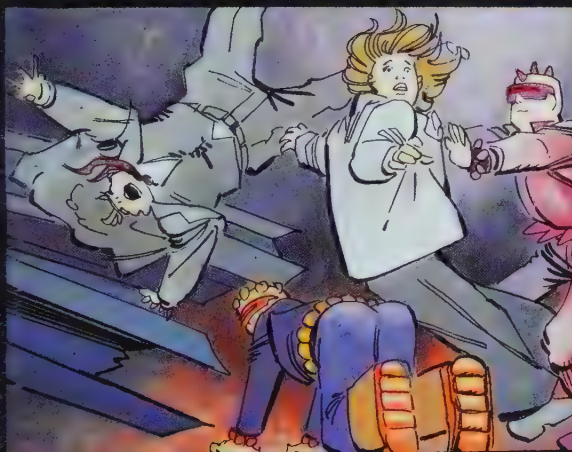
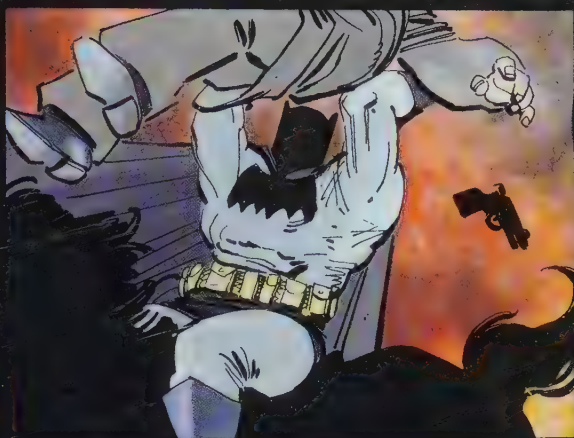




LIKE THE *GESTAPO*, THEY MOVED IN ON US--*BATMAN* AND THAT *BRAT ARMY* OF HIS-- YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT WE WERE *CRIMINALS*.



I TRIED TO DEFEND MYSELF-- HE SINGLED ME OUT--

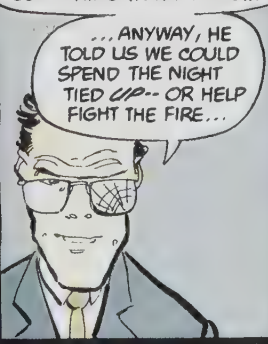


BROKE THREE RIBS-- AND THIS *BRACE* ISN'T FOR *LAUGHS*. WHENEVER THEY CATCH THAT *LUNATIC*, HE'LL HEAR FROM MY *ATTORNEY*.

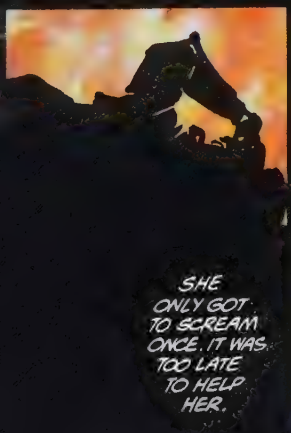


WHO GAVE HIM THE RIGHT?

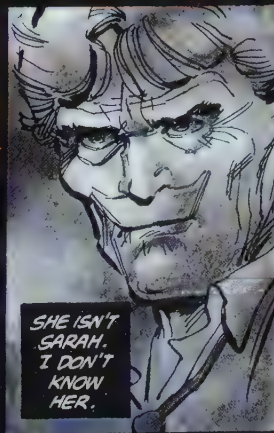
WHEN HE TALKED-- *BATMAN*, I MEAN-- IT WAS... IT'S HARD TO DESCRIBE... THERE WAS SOMETHING IN HIS VOICE...



... ANYWAY, HE TOLD US WE COULD SPEND THE NIGHT TIED *UP*-- OR HELP FIGHT THE FIRE...

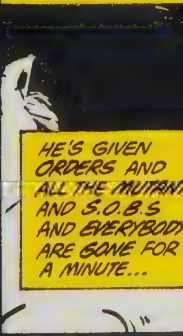


SHE ONLY GOT TO SCREAM ONCE. IT WAS TOO LATE TO HELP HER.



SHE ISN'T SARAH. I DON'T KNOW HER.

IT'S ONLY ONCE... IN THE WHOLE NIGHT... THAT IT SHOWS...



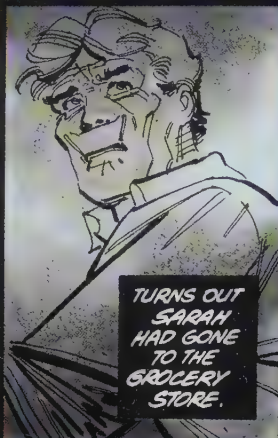
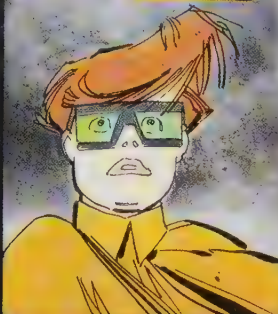
HE'S GIVEN ORDERS AND ALL THE *MUTANTS* AND *S.O.B.'S* AND *EVERYBODY* ARE GONE FOR A MINUTE...



... HE JUST *SASS* IN HIS *SADDLE* LIKE AN OLD MAN...

...THEN HE STRAIGHTENS UP AND GRINS AT ME LIKE IT'S FUNNY.

HE CAN'T DIE...



Turns out Sarah had gone to the grocery store.

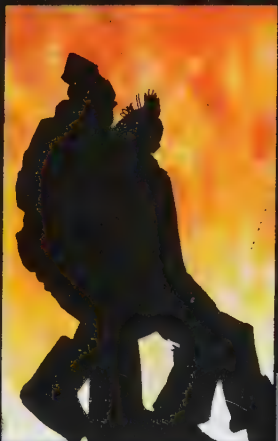
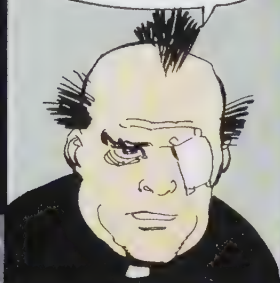
Turns out Sarah forgot to tell me she needed milk.

One more thing.



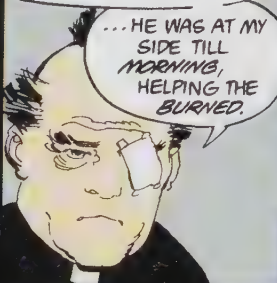
AFTER THE MOB LEFT, THE EXPLOSIONS CONTINUED. THE FIRES WERE EVERYWHERE...

...I WAS BARELY CONSCIOUS... IF NOT FOR THE BOY, I...

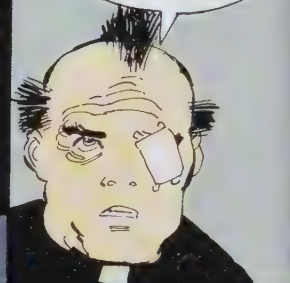


THAT'S RIGHT. THE BOY WITH THE RADIO. HE PULLED ME CLEAR. SAVED MY LIFE. WHEN BATMAN DROPPED OFF THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES, THE BOY PASSED THEM AROUND...

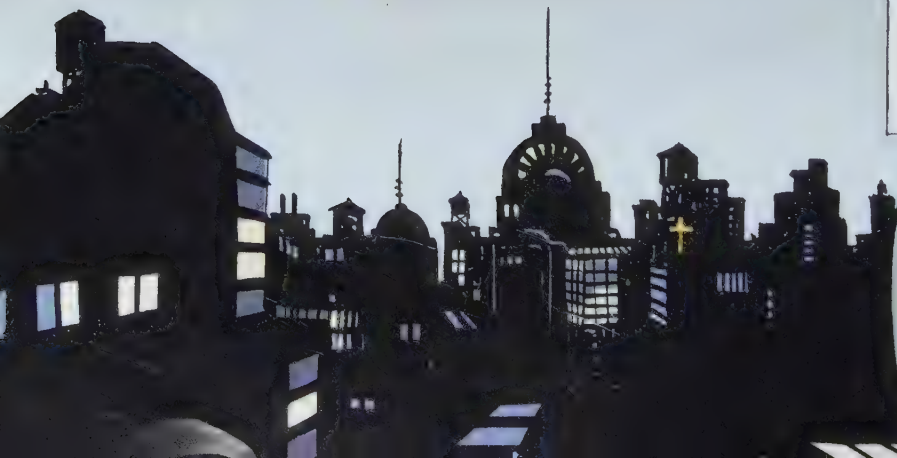
...HE WAS AT MY SIDE TILL MORNING, HELPING THE BURNED.



BUT, OF COURSE, THERE WASN'T ANY MORNING ...



...ONE WEEK LATER, IT'S STILL DARK AT HIGH NOON IN GOTHAM CITY. IT'S STILL WINTER IN AUGUST. HERE'S CARLA SHRIEK TO EXPLAIN...

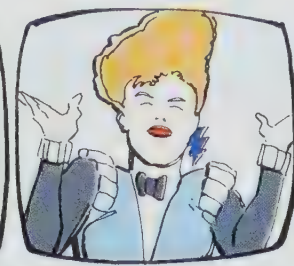
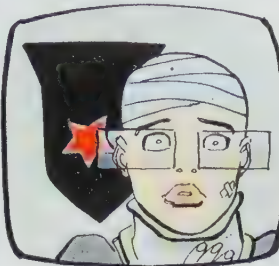


LOLA, THE SOVIET
OLD BRINGER WAS
DESIGNED TO INDUCE
THE ENVIRONMENTAL
EFFECTS OF FULL-SCALE
NUCLEAR WAR. FIRST,
IT GENERATED THE PULSE
THAT BLACKED OUT--

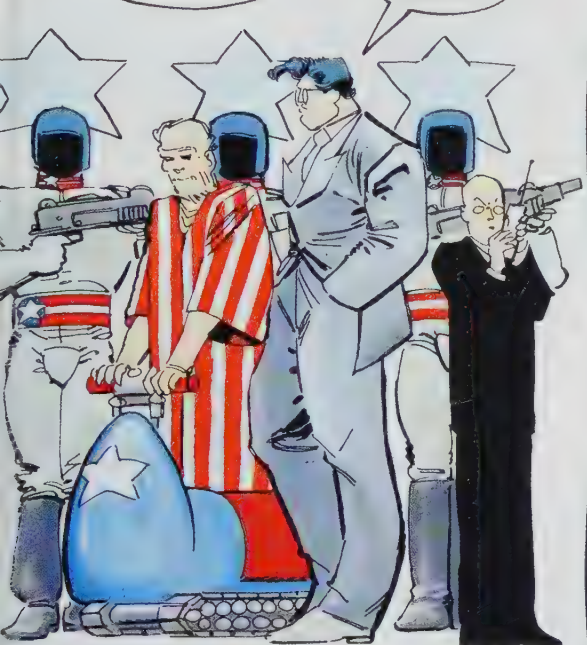
ON THAT PULSE-- DON'T
MISS OUR SPECIAL
TONIGHT-- YOUR
FAVORITE STARS ARE
ASKED "WHERE WERE
YOU WHEN THE LIGHTS
WENT OUT?" CARLA?

LOLA, THE PULSE WAS
ONLY THE BEGINNING.
WEATHER PATTERNS
ACROSS THE HEMISPHERE
HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY
DISRUPTED--

THEY SURE HAVE,
CARLA. AND SO
HAS MY WARDROBE.
THIS IS THE COLDEST
DAY OF THE YEAR.
I DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO WEAR
THESE DAYS...



STARVING
CUBANS WON'T BUDGE
RIOTS
MEDIA PUSH
CREDIBILITY DISASTER
...NO, MR. PRESIDENT. I'M AFRAID HE'LL NEVER LET ME BRING HIM IN ALIVE...



THE COLDEST, LOLA--
UNTIL TOMORROW. THE
BOMB'S BLAST THRUST
HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS
OF TONS OF SOOT INTO
THE STRATOSPHERE--

--CREATING A BLACK
CLOUD THAT COVERS
THE AMERICAS,
BLOTING OUT THE SUN--
DEPRIVING US OF LIGHT
AND HEAT...



...PEOPLE ARE FREEZING
TO DEATH BY THE
THOUSANDS... THE
DAMAGE TO CROPS
COULD WELL BRING ON
A FAMINE...

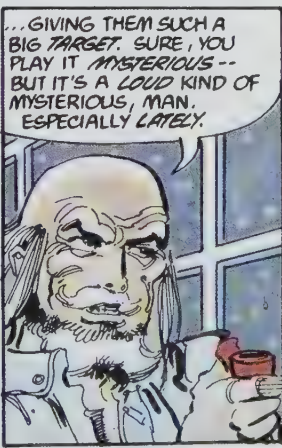
I'M SURPRISED HE
TOOK THE CHANCE
OF COMING TO
AMERICA-- WITH
CLARK IN THE
COUNTRY--

--BUT OLIVER
HAS ALWAYS
LIVED BY HIS
IMPULSES.

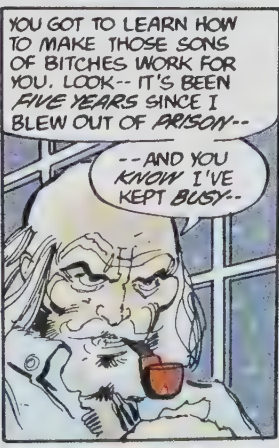


THIS PARTICULAR
IMPULSE I CAN
UNDERSTAND...

YOU'VE ALWAYS
HAD IT WRONG,
BRUCE...

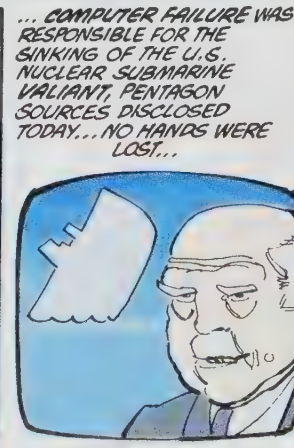


...GIVING THEM SUCH A
BIG TARGET. SURE, YOU
PLAY IT MYSTERIOUS--
BUT IT'S A LOUD KIND OF
MYSTERIOUS, MAN.
ESPECIALLY LATELY.

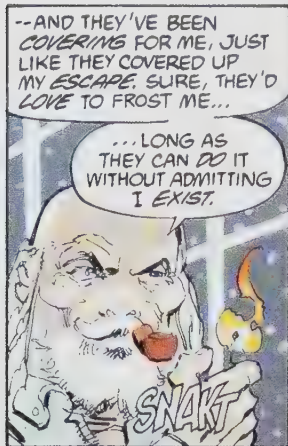


YOU GOT TO LEARN HOW
TO MAKE THOSE SONS
OF BITCHES WORK FOR
YOU. LOOK-- IT'S BEEN
FIVE YEARS SINCE I
BLEW OUT OF PRISON--

--AND YOU
KNOW I'VE
KEPT BUSY--



... COMPUTER FAILURE WAS
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
SINKING OF THE U.S.
NUCLEAR SUBMARINE
VALIANT. PENTAGON
SOURCES DISCLOSED
TODAY... NO HANDS WERE
LOST...



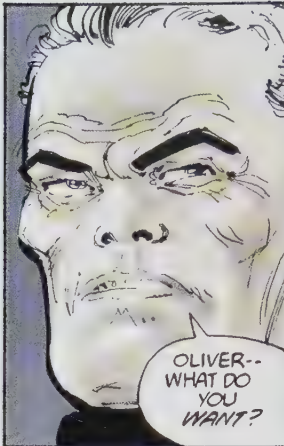
--AND THEY'VE BEEN COVERING FOR ME, JUST LIKE THEY COVERED UP MY ESCAPE. SURE, THEY'D LOVE TO FROST ME...

...LONG AS THEY CAN DO IT WITHOUT ADMITTING I EXIST.

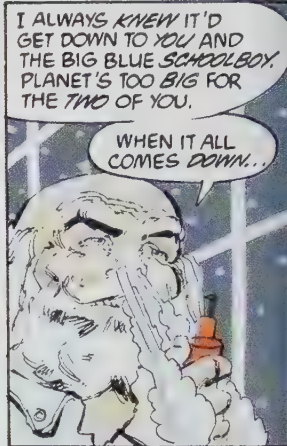


BUT YOU, BRUCE--

--MAN, THEY HAVE TO KILL YOU.



OLIVER-- WHAT DO YOU WANT?



I ALWAYS KNEW IT'D GET DOWN TO YOU AND THE BIG BLUE SCHOOLBOY. PLANET'S TOO BIG FOR THE TWO OF YOU.

WHEN IT ALL COMES DOWN...



...I WANT A PIECE OF HIM. A SMALL PIECE WILL DO. FOR OLD TIMES SAKE, YOU KNOW...

...IT STILL HURTS WHEN IT'S COLD...



...NOTHING WE CAN'T HANDLE, FOLKS. WE'RE STILL AMERICA-- AND I'M STILL PRESIDENT.



WHO WAS THAT SPUD? TALKS LIKE MY DAD.

HE USED TO FIGHT CRIME.



...THE PRESIDENT HAS IMPOSED LIMITED MARTIAL LAW, THEREBY DEPLOYING MILITARY AID TO LAW-ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AGAINST OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE AND LOOTING...

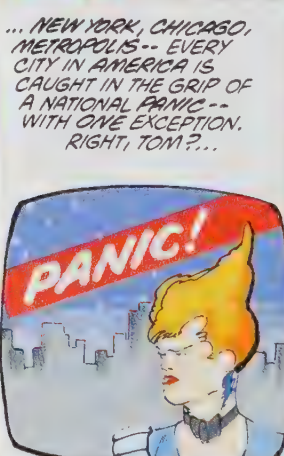


RIGHT THERE-- IN THAT SADDLE-- IS ALL THE REASON I NEED...

...IT'S ALMOST FRIGHTENING HOW QUICKLY SHE'S LEARNING TO RIDE...

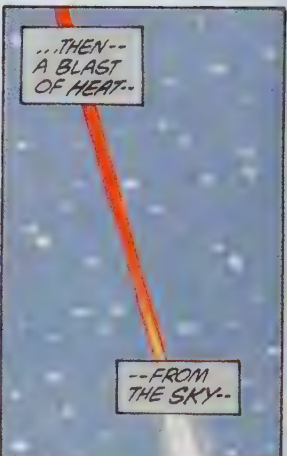


SHE HAS DECADES-- DECADES, LEFT TO HER...



...NEW YORK, CHICAGO, METROPOLIS-- EVERY CITY IN AMERICA IS CAUGHT IN THE GRIP OF A NATIONAL PANIC-- WITH ONE EXCEPTION. RIGHT, TOM?...

PANIC!



...THEN-- A BLAST OF HEAT--

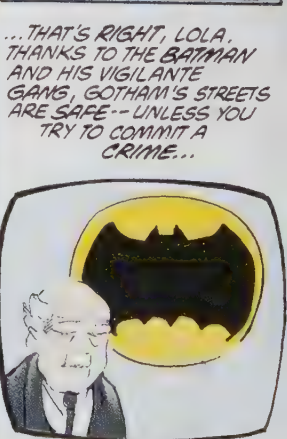
--FROM THE SKY--

WHERE?

--AND IT BEGINS...



CRIME ALLEY.



...THAT'S RIGHT, LOLA. THANKS TO THE BATMAN AND HIS VIGILANTE GANGS, GOTHAM'S STREETS ARE SAFE-- UNLESS YOU TRY TO COMMIT A CRIME...

...HEALING
QUITE POORLY,
MASTER
BRUCE.

SHALL I
PREPARE
ANOTHER
STIMULANT?
WHY DELAY
YOUR VERY FIRST
CARDIAC ARREST?

OLIVER-- MAYBE
OLIVER WAS
RIGHT... ALL
ALONG...

...CRAZY
AS IT
SOUNDS...

...BLOODY
WALKING
HOSPITAL
BED...

THAT'S
ENOUGH,
ALFRED.

...IN THE PAST WEEK,
SEVENTY THREE VIOLENT
ATTACKS ON WOULD-BE
LOOTERS HAVE BEEN
ATTRIBUTED BY WITNESSES
TO THE BATMAN AND HIS
GANG...

THAT NIGHT... BEGAN
THIRTY YEARS OF HUNTING
THIEVES AND MURDERERS...

...IS THAT WHAT
YOU INTENDED?...

THE TIMING... MUST BE
EXACT...

...IN ONE
MOUR... AT
MIDNIGHT...

...A GRAND
DEATH...

...WHEN YOU CAME FOR
ME... IN THE CAVE... I
WAS JUST SIX YEARS
OLD...

...YOU WERE
ANCIENT...
NOTHING
COULD KILL
YOU...

...BUT THE
WAR...

...COMMISSIONER YINDEL
REFUSED TO COMMENT
ON THE CHARGE THAT
GOTHAM'S POLICE HAVE
BEEN LAX IN PURSUING
THE MURDER CHARGE
AGAINST THE BATMAN...

RUMORS FLY-- ARMY
HELICOPTERS HOVER
OVER THE EMPTY
STREETS OF CRIME
ALLEY-- IS THIS A
MILITARY EFFORT TO
CAPTURE THE BATMAN--

...IT DID NOT
BEGIN
THEN...

NO... IT WAS... TWO YEARS
LATER... WHEN HER
NECKLACE CAUGHT ON
HIS WRIST...

...WHEN HE
SHOVED HIS
PISTOL TO
HER JAW
AND PULLED
THE TRIGGER...

...AND EVERYTHING
MY MOTHER WAS
STRUCK THE PAVEMENT
AS A BLOODY WAD...

SOMEWHERE IN
THE ENDLESS
NIGHT... LIKE A
BELLOW FROM
A WOUNDED
BEAR...

...THE ANSWER
COMES...

...ARMY TROOPS HAVE
EVACUATED THE SLUM
KNOWN AS CRIME
ALLEY-- NO EXPLANATION
IS GIVEN-- NEWS
COVERAGE HAS BEEN
FLATLY DENIED--

THIS ONE
YOU WON'T
BELIEVE,
CLARK.

MY BEST
TRICK...

--OR IS THIS THE FINAL
BATTLE BETWEEN TWO
TITANS-- THE LAST
STAND FOR THE CAPED
CRUSADER-- FACING
THE MIGHT OF THE MAN
OF STEEL

DO NOT
ADJUST
YOUR
SET

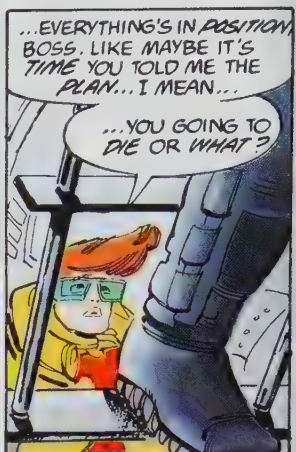


THEY LEAVE A HOLE
IN THE CORDON
BIG ENOUGH TO
DRIVE A TANK
THROUGH.

THAT'S EXACTLY
WHAT I DO.

TWENTY MINUTES
LEFT. I KNOW YOU
WON'T BE LATE,
CLARK.

YOU HATE
TO STAY
UP LATE.



...EVERYTHING'S IN POSITION,
BOSS. LIKE MAYBE IT'S
TIME YOU TOLD ME THE
PLAN... I MEAN...

...YOU GOING TO
DIE OR WHAT?

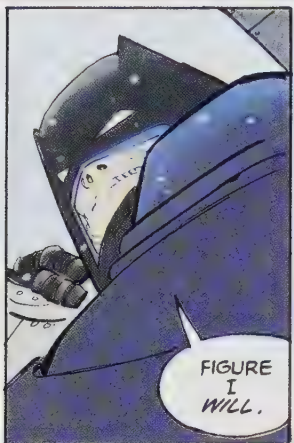
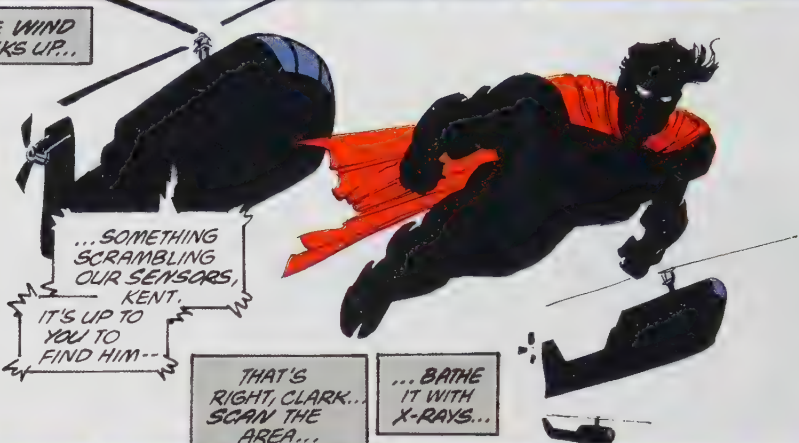


FIGURE
I
WILL.

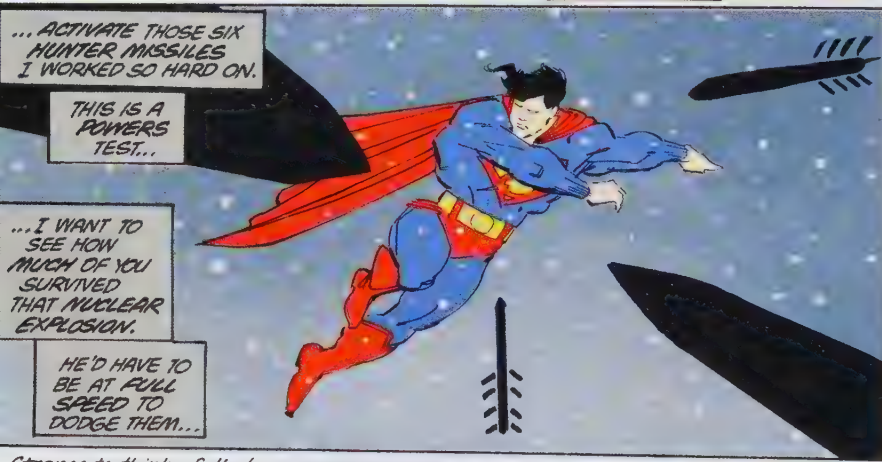
THE WIND
PICKS UP...



...SOMETHING
SCRAMBLING
OUR SENSORS,
KENT.
IT'S UP TO
YOU TO
FIND HIM--

THAT'S
RIGHT, CLARK...
SCAN THE
AREA...

...BATHE
IT WITH
X-RAYS...

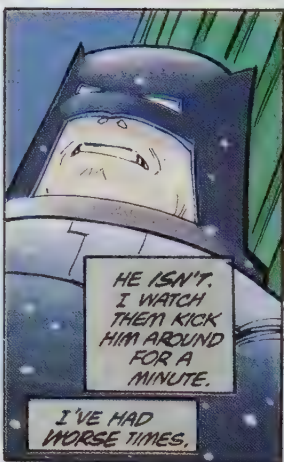


... ACTIVATE THOSE SIX
HUNTER MISSILES
I WORKED SO HARD ON.

THIS IS A
POWERS
TEST...

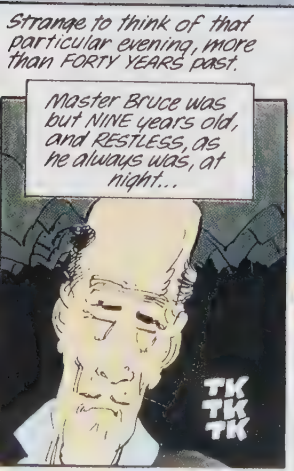
... I WANT TO
SEE HOW
MUCH OF YOU
SURVIVED
THAT NUCLEAR
EXPLOSION.

HE'D HAVE TO
BE AT FULL
SPEED TO
DODGE THEM...



HE ISN'T.
I WATCH
THEM KICK
HIM AROUND
FOR A
MINUTE.

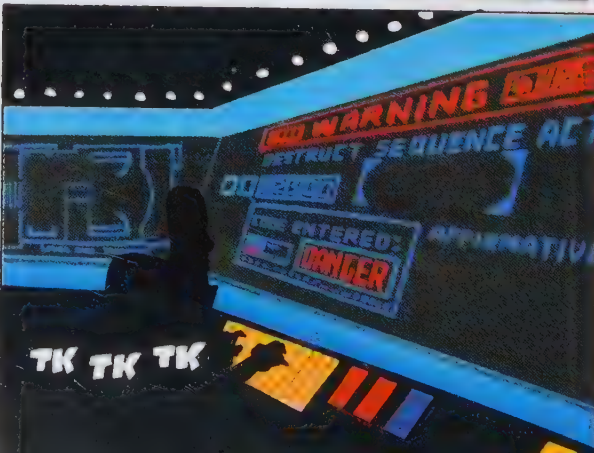
I'VE HAD
WORSE TIMES.



TK
TK
TK

Strange to think of that
particular evening, more
than forty years past.

Master Bruce was
but NINE years old,
and RESTLESS, as
he always was, at
night...



Still he sat, politely
enough, on his bed, as
Alfred read to him.

"The Purloined Letter"
"yes, that was the
story..."

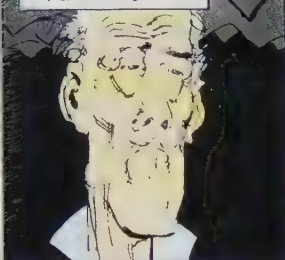
...he listened, in
silence, as, finishing
the tale, Alfred
explained the
IMPORTANCE OF MR.
Poe's CONTRIBUTION
to detective fiction.

Then, with a voice
like STEEL...

...so frightfully FORMAL,
his dark eyes FLASHING...

Alfred assured him
that the villain had
met justice.

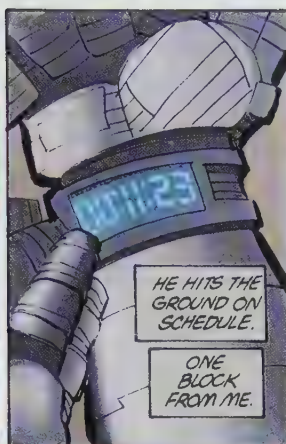
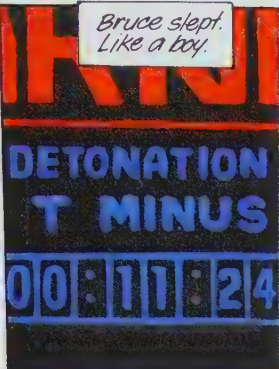
...Master Bruce
asked --- NO,
DEMANDED...
"the killer was
CAUGHT. And
RUINED."



Bruce slept.
Like a boy.

DETONATION
T MINUS

00:11:24



HE HITS THE
GROUND ON
SCHEDULE.

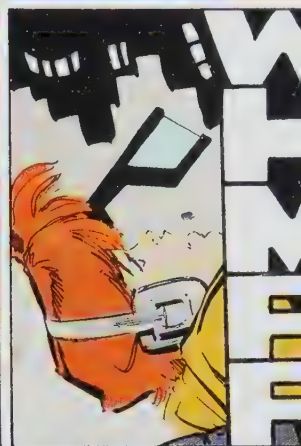
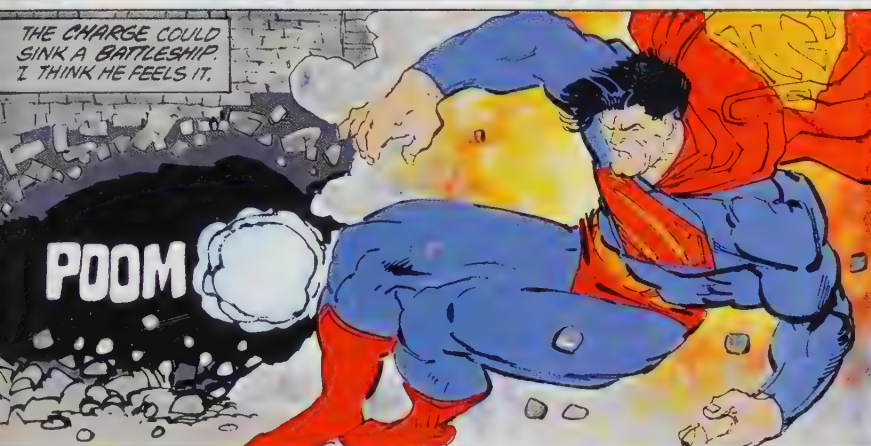
ONE
BLOCK
FROM ME.



BREATHING
A LITTLE
FAST--

IT'S
ROBIN'S
TURN--

THE CHARGE COULD
SINK A BATTLESHIP.
I THINK HE FEELS IT.



ISN'T
TONIGHT
A SCHOOL
NIGHT?

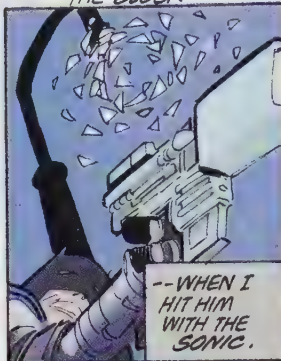


MORE WIND.

NOW HE'S TALKING-- TRYING TO REASON WITH ME. I CAN'T HEAR HIM, OF COURSE...

...NO, MY EARS ARE PROTECTED-- SO ALL I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT IS MY TEETH--

--RATTLING FROM MY JAW-- OR SHATTERING, LIKE EVERY WINDOW ON THE BLOCK--

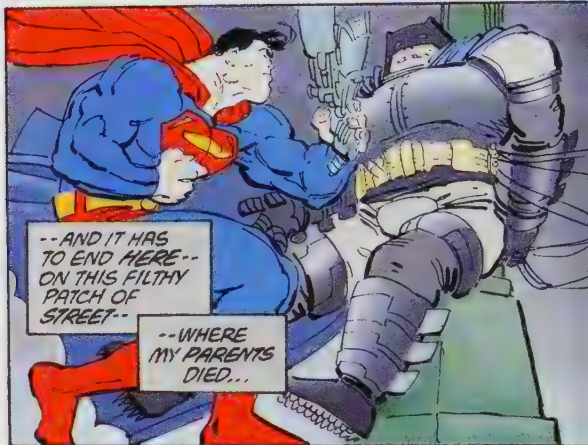


--WHEN I HIT HIM WITH THE SONIC.

A NOSEBLEED -- SO SOON, CLARK--

DON'T DROP NOW-- THE NIGHT IS YOUNG--

AND I HAVE-- SO MUCH PLANNED--



--AND IT HAS TO END HERE-- ON THIS FILTHY PATCH OF STREET--

--WHERE MY PARENTS DIED...

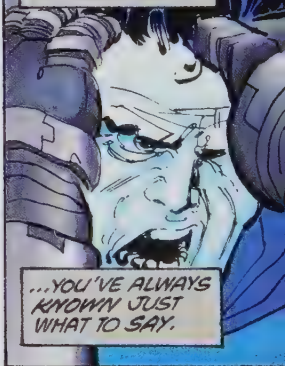


...WHERE I CAN USE THE CITY'S POWER--

--EVERY WATT OF IT--

--TO FRY YOUR BRAIN--

--STILL TALKING-- KEEP TALKING, CLARK...

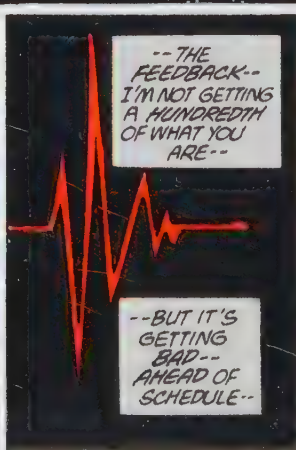


...YOU'VE ALWAYS KNOWN JUST WHAT TO SAY.



"YES"-- YOU ALWAYS SAY YES-- TO ANYONE WITH A BADGE-- OR A FLAG--

--NO GOOD--



--THE FEEDBACK-- I'M NOT GETTING A HUNDREDTH OF WHAT YOU ARE--

--BUT IT'S GETTING BAD-- AHEAD OF SCHEDULE--

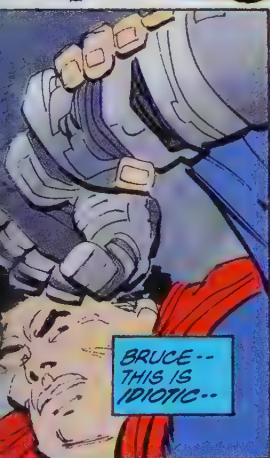
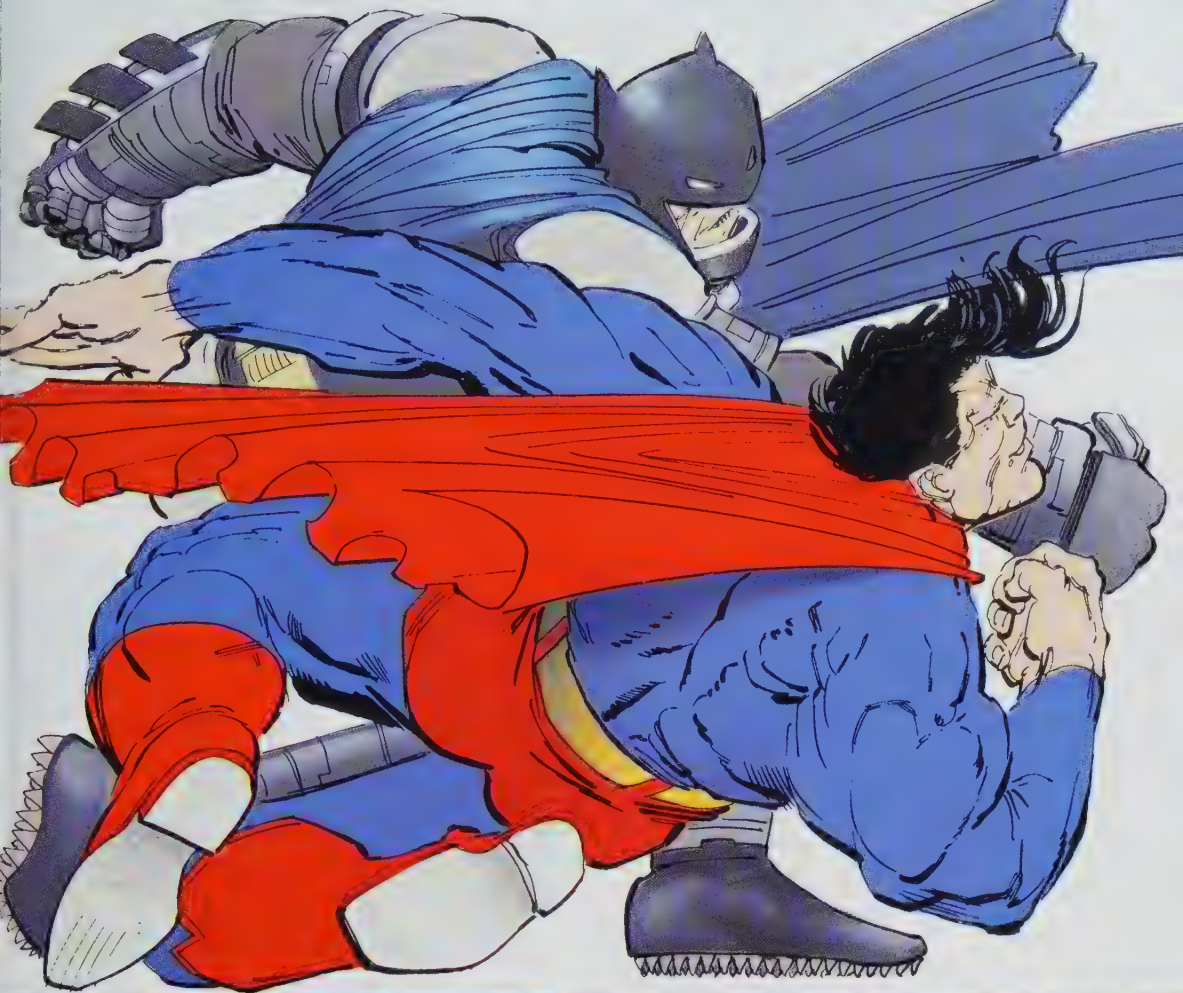


--WHAT DIDN'T HIT YOU-- AND ME-- FED THIS SUIT, CLARK--



--IT'S WAY PAST TIME YOU LEARNED-- WHAT IT MEANS--

--TO BE A MAN--

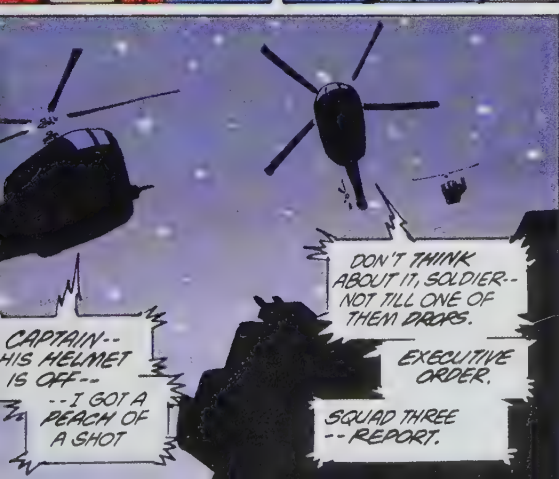
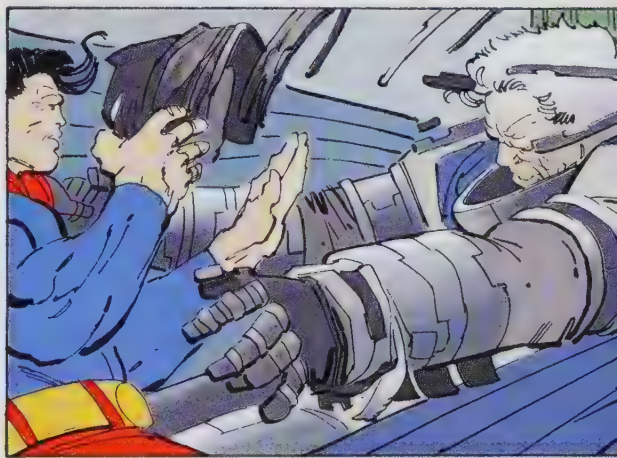


BRUCE--
THIS IS
IDIOTIC--



YOU'RE JUST BONE AND MEAT--

--LIKE ALL
THE REST.



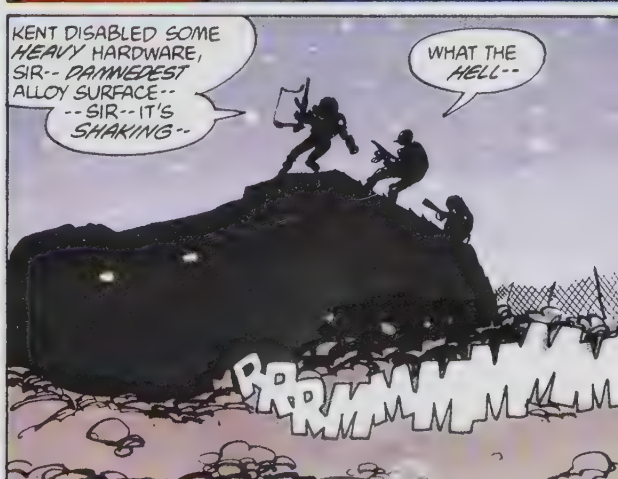
CAPTAIN--
HIS HELMET
IS OFF--

-- I GOT A
PEACH OF
A SHOT

DON'T THINK
ABOUT IT, SOLDIER--
NOT TILL ONE OF
THEM DROPS.

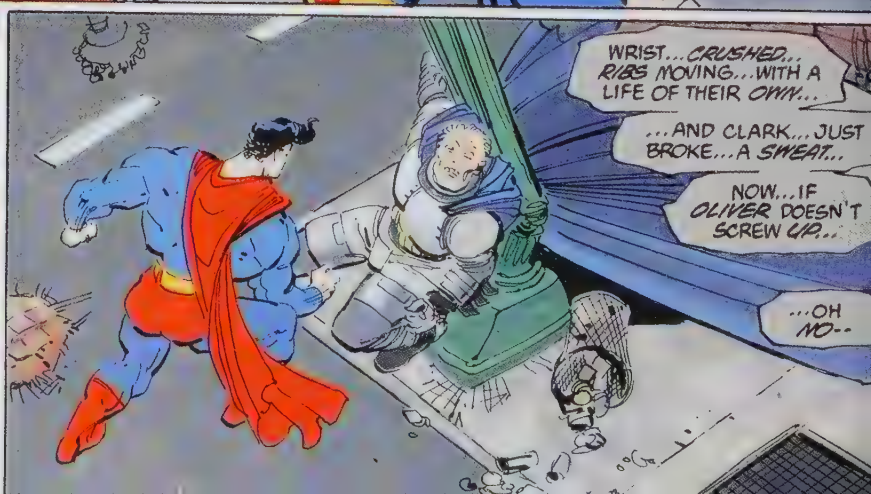
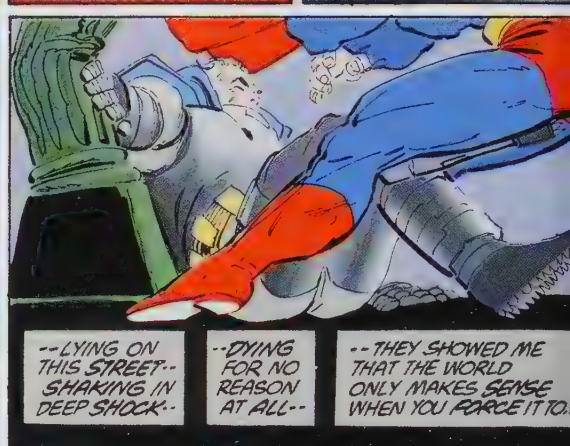
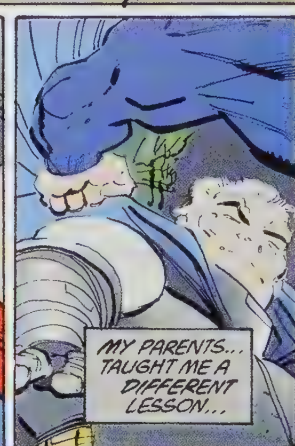
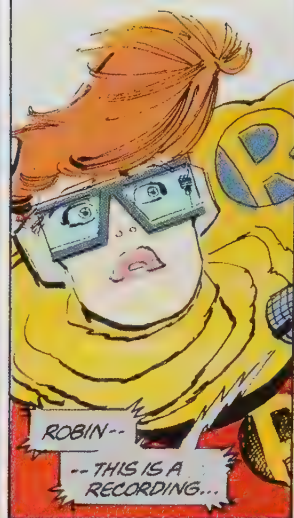
EXECUTIVE
ORDER.

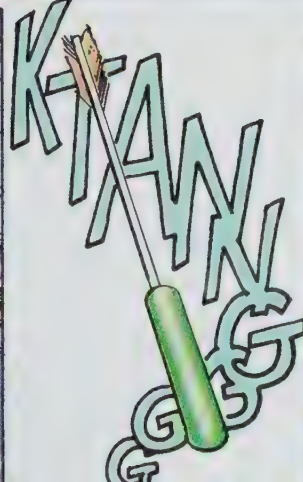
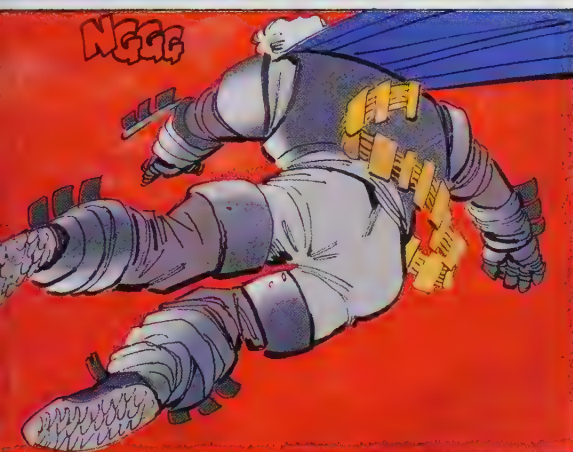
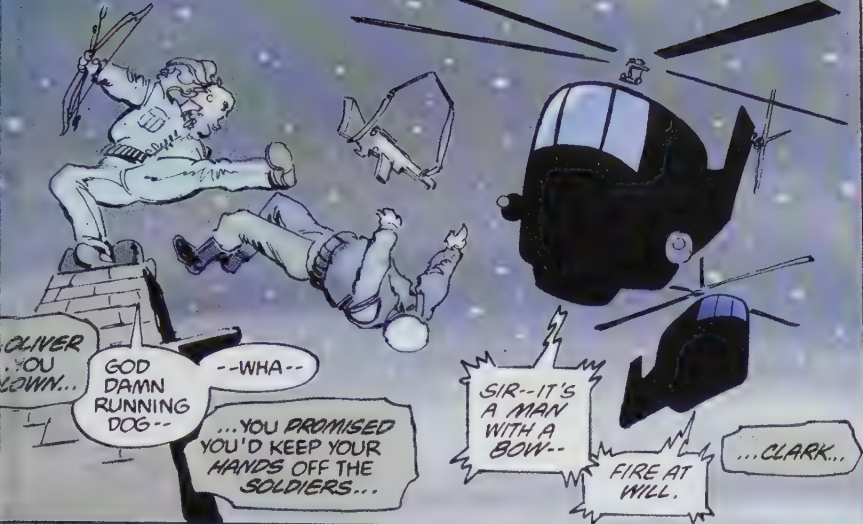
SQUAD THREE
--REPORT.

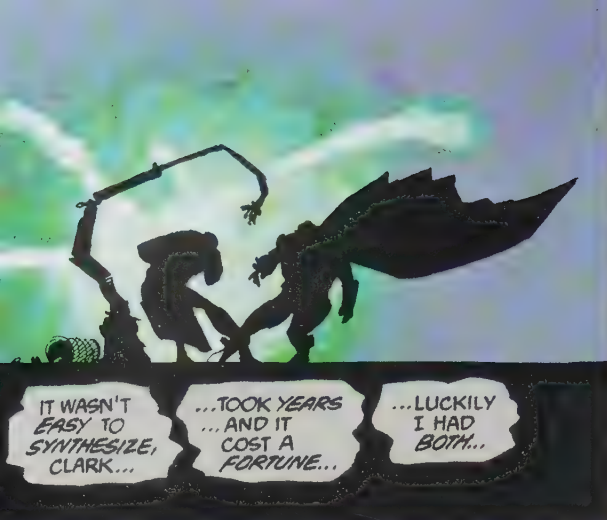


KENT DISABLED SOME
HEAVY HARDWARE,
SIR-- DAMNEDST
ALLOY SURFACE--
--SIR-- IT'S
SHAKING--

WHAT THE
HELL--



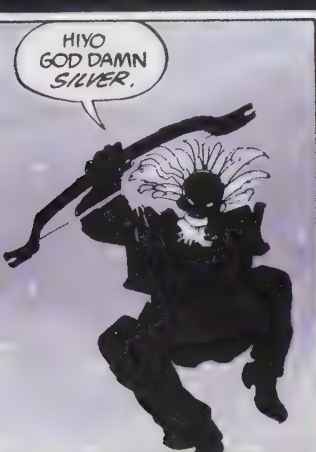




IT WASN'T
EASY TO
SYNTHESIZE,
CLARK...

...TOOK YEARS
...AND IT
COST A
FORTUNE...

...LUCKILY
I HAD
BOTH...

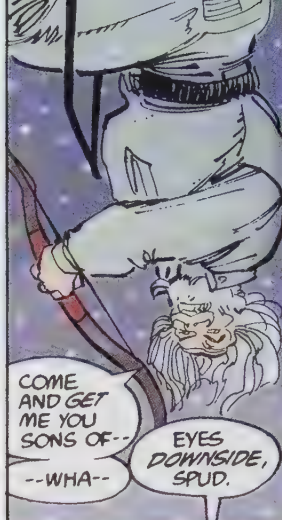


HIYO
GOD DAMN
SILVER.



KOFF

BRUCE--
YOUR
HEART--

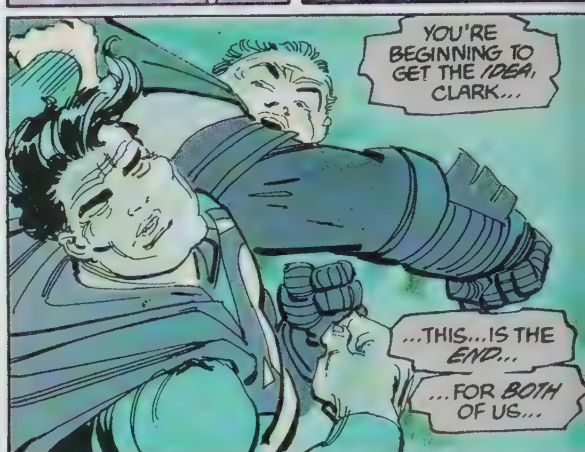


COME
AND GET
ME YOU
SONS OF--
--WHA--

EYES
DOWNSIDE,
SPUD.



FIGURE
WE GOT
ALL
WEEK...



YOU'RE
BEGINNING TO
GET THE IDEA,
CLARK...

...THIS...IS THE
END...

...FOR BOTH
OF US...



--TANK'S BREAKING
AWAY--

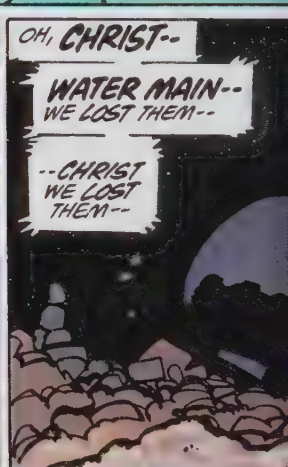
--GOT THEM--
WHOLE AREA'S
SURROUNDED--

--HEADING ACROSS
THE PARKING LOT--



--WHAT--FELL
THROUGH--

--WHAT THE
HELL--



OH, CHRIST--

WATER MAIN--
WE LOST THEM--

--CHRIST
WE LOST
THEM--



WE COULD
HAVE CHANGED
THE WORLD...

...NOW... LOOK
AT US...



I'VE BECOME...
A POLITICAL
LIABILITY...
...AND
YOU...



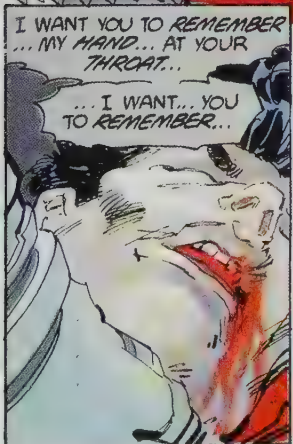
...YOU'RE
A JOKE...



...I WANT YOU...
TO REMEMBER,
CLARK...

...IN ALL THE
YEARS TO COME...

...IN YOUR
MOST PRIVATE
MOMENTS...



I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER
... MY HAND... AT YOUR
THROAT...

... I WANT... YOU
TO REMEMBER...

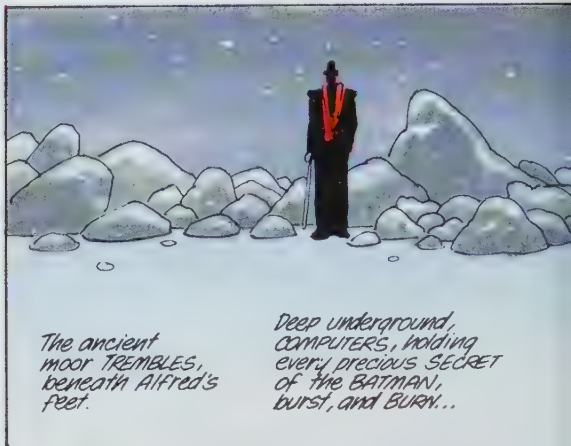


...THE ONE
MAN WHO
BEAT YOU...





The clock
strikes
TWELVE.



The ancient
moor TREMBLES,
beneath Alfred's
feet.

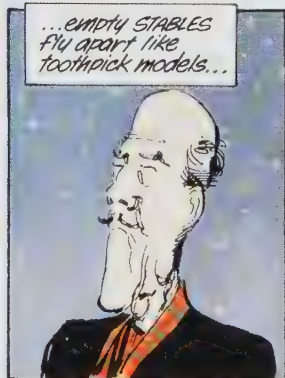
Deep underground,
computers, holding
every precious SECRET
of the BATMAN,
burst, and BURN...

Mrs. Wayne's priceless
collection of PORCELAIN
shatters, musically...

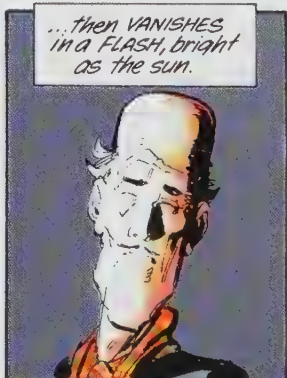
...the central mass of
Wayne Manor SHUDDERS,
as if ALIVE...

The world turns RUBY
RED. The manor roof
RISES, madly, into
the sky, riding a
pillar of FLAME.

A joint travels the
length of Alfred's
SPINE. Of course, he
thinks, as his head
goes light.



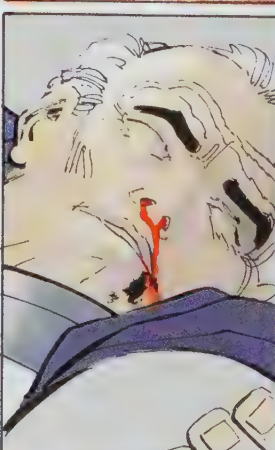
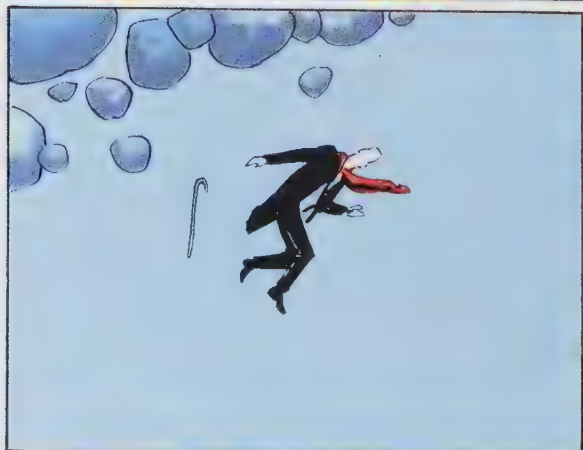
...empty STABLES
fly apart like
toothpick models...



...then VANISHES
in a FLASH, bright
as the sun.



How utterly
proper.



DON'T
TOUCH
HIM--

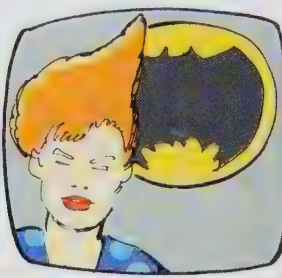
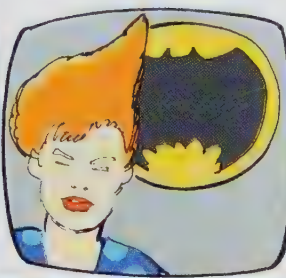
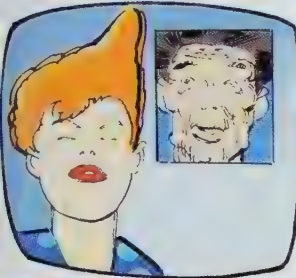
... COMMENT
HIS SOUL...

... CLOUD HAS ALMOST
COMPLETELY CLEARED IN
THE PAST SEVENTY-TWO
HOURS. THE PRESIDENT
HAS DECLARED A STATE
OF STABILIZED
EMERGENCY...

REPEATING THE WEEK'S
TOP STORIES-- THE
SPECTACULAR CAREER
OF THE BATMAN
CAME TO A TRAGIC
CONCLUSION...

... AS THE CRIMEFIGHTER
SUFFERED A HEART
ATTACK WHILE
BATTLING GOVERNMENT
TROOPS.

HE HAS BEEN
IDENTIFIED AS
FIFTY-FIVE YEAR OLD
BILLIONAIRE BRUCE
WAYNE-- AND HIS
DEATH HAS PROVEN
AS MYSTERIOUS AS
HIS LIFE...



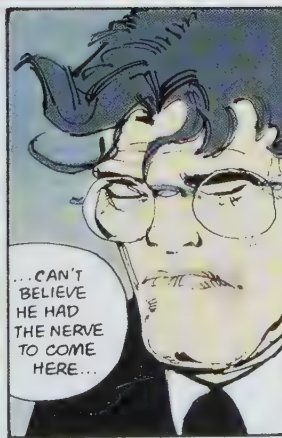
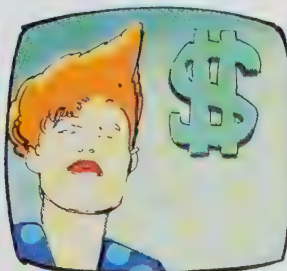
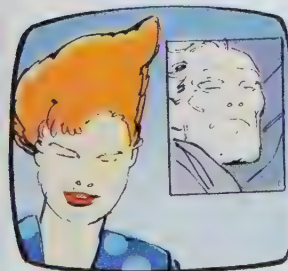
SON OF A
BITCH-- I KNOW
WHO KILLED
HIM--

SELINA--
THIS IS NO
GOOD...

WAYNE MANOR WAS
LEVELLED BY A SERIES
OF EXPLOSIONS, SET
APPARENTLY, BY WAYNE'S
BUTLER, FOUND DEAD
FROM A STROKE AT
THE SCENE...

... FLAMES DESTROYED
WHATEVER EVIDENCE
MAY HAVE EXISTED AS
TO BATMAN'S METHODS.
ALSO MISSING, IT
SEEMS, IS THE WAYNE
FORTUNE...

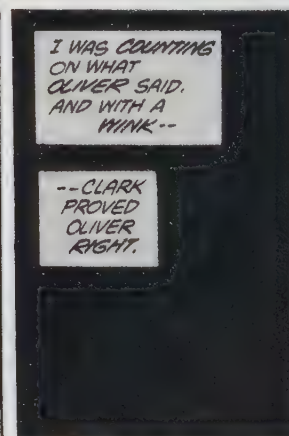
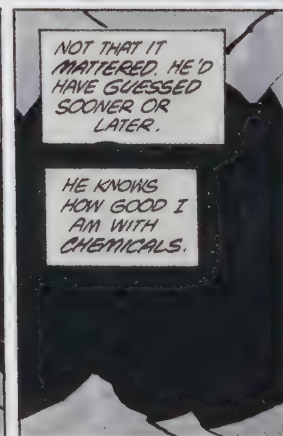
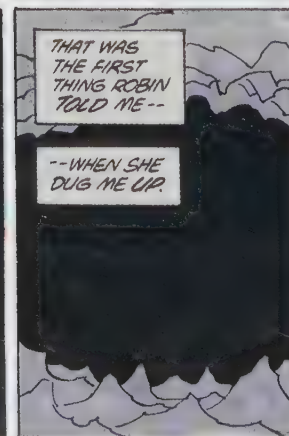
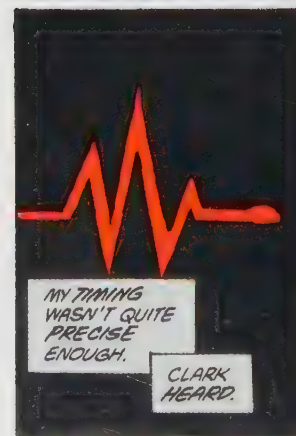
INTERNAL REVENUE
AGENTS INVESTIGATED
WAYNE'S RECORDS,
FINDING HIS EVERY
BANK ACCOUNT
EMPTY, EVERY STOCK
SOLD...



... CAN'T
BELIEVE
HE HAD
THE NERVE
TO COME
HERE...



...WHERE THE MONEY
WENT IS ONE MORE
SECRET WAYNE HAS
TAKEN TO HIS GRAVE...
HIS BODY WAS CLAIMED
BY HIS ONLY LIVING
RELATIVE, A DISTANT
COUSIN...



I'LL LEAVE ME
ONE, NOW. IN
RETURN, I'LL
STAY QUIET.

SO WILL ROBIN--
AND THE REST...

THERE-- SEE
THAT LEDGE?
GET A LAMP
UP THERE.

RIGHT,
BOSS.

CAREFUL
WITH
THAT--

RIGHT. ALL
SET, BOSS.

GOOD, NOW
GATHER ROUND.

WE HAVEN'T
GOT ALL NIGHT,
BOY.

THAT'S
NOT
TRUE...

... WE HAVE YEARS--
AS MANY AS WE
NEED...

FIRST WE GET A
STEADY SUPPLY OF
WATER. THERE'S
A SPRING RIGHT
BENEATH--

-- ROBIN!
SIT UP
STRAIGHT.

YES,
SIR.

YEARS-- TO
TRAIN AND
STUDY AND
PLAN...

... HERE, IN THE ENDLESS
CAVE, FAR PAST THE
BURNT REMAINS OF A
CRIMEFIGHTER WHOSE
TIME HAS PASSED...

IT BEGINS HERE-- AN
ARMY-- TO BRING
SENSE TO A WORLD
PLAGUED BY WORSE
THAN THIEVES AND
MURDERERS...

THIS WILL
BE A
GOOD
LIFE...

... GOOD
ENOUGH.

**COVER
GALLERY**





HARDCOVER EDITION
DESIGNED BY CHIP KIDD



BATMAN®: THE DARK KNIGHT® RETURNS



FRANK MILLER

with KLAUS JANSON and LYNN VARLEY

THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL

"This is the first thing I ever called 'Dark Knight'—a proposal for a relaunch of Batman, it provided me backstory for DK 1 and much of the substance for BATMAN: YEAR ONE."

—FRANK MILLER

THE DARK KNIGHT

Original

Proposal 2/29/84

THE DARK KNIGHT

A DC Metropolis Comic

by Frank Miller

2/29/84

Episode One

WHO I AM

HOW I CAME TO BE

A violent thunderstorm batters stately Wayne Manor. Lightning flashes, delineating an otherwise unlit study. We see a bloody hand reach for a huge snifter of brandy, and bring it to a pair of bruised and swollen lips. Bruce Wayne, age twenty-four, his face battered almost beyond recognition, explains that he is afraid he may have to die tonight.

A second lightning flash reveals that Bruce is speaking to a marble bust of his father. Bruce speaks fondly of his early childhood. He remembers how many times his father told him that his impetuous nature would someday be the death of young Bruce.

... Bruce Wayne, age six, gleefully explores the grounds of Wayne Manor. Faithful family retainer Alfred Pennyworth tries to keep up with the athletic child, but Bruce tears off after a rabbit, leaving Alfred behind. The rabbit ducks into a hole, and Bruce recklessly follows. Almost immediately, the earth gives way under Bruce, and he tumbles headlong into darkness.

DARK KNIGHT

~~HOLY TERROR~~/p3

His scraped knees and the echo of his fall tell Bruce that he is in a large cave. Then, he hears screeching, and the flapping of thousands of wings. Bats come at him, then retreat as he swings his arms wildly. He looks about, his vision adjusting to the darkness, and sees one incredibly huge bat, hugging the floor, staring back at him, unwilling to retreat as his brothers did ...

Bruce continues to talk to his father. He's confused by the things he's finding himself thinking about tonight. He wants his father to help him find a way to go on. He has just lost, failed at the only thing that matters to him. So why is he thinking about Zorro, of all things?

... the black and white image of Douglas Fairbanks Jr. as Zorro flickers across a movie screen. Bruce, age seven, watches, wide-eyed and wondering, as Zorro routs a group of soldiers.

Bruce is ecstatic as they leave the theatre. His parents laugh and hold hands as Bruce jumps and dances, imitating his new hero. Father mentions that the movie was one of his old favorites. The Waynes are a happy, attractive couple in their late thirties. As they walk down the street, we see, huge in the foreground, footsteps following them.

~~DARK KNIGHT~~ •
~~HOLY TERROR~~/p4

A gunman comes up behind the Waynes, threatening, demanding Thomas and Martha hand over their cash. Thomas turns, making a fist. The gunman fires, once, and Thomas crumples to the pavement. Bruce steps toward the gunman, his mouth forming a scream. The gunman brings the barrel of his pistol across Bruce's face, stopping the scream and knocking Bruce to the ground. Martha steps forward to protect her child. The gunman grabs her by her diamond necklace, then fires. The necklace comes free in his hand as Martha is propelled backward, to fall across her husband.

Time seems to freeze as Bruce looks up at the gunman's face. He sees a deadness in the man's eyes, the same deadness he'd seen in the eyes of a man whose picture he'd seen in a newspaper. A man named Oswald who was supposed to have shot the President. Bruce stares, looking at what seems to be a demon, as the gunman points his pistol at Bruce. Then, Bruce sees a glimmer of guilt in the gunman's eyes, and knows that it is a man who shot his parents. It's a sight he'll never forget. The gunman backs away, and flees into the night.

That night, Bruce is barely conscious of a woman's kind attention, and many questions from stern-faced policemen. Then all sense of time is lost. Days and weeks of doctors and therapists float by, all viewed as if from an immense distance by Bruce. He

~~DARK KNIGHT~~
~~HOLY TERROR~~/p5

hears himself described as traumatized, catatonic. But Bruce knows that he has simply left the world, and will not return until he finds a reason to.

Three months after his parents' murder, Bruce finds his reason. As Alfred sits by his hospital bed, looking worried and old, Bruce wakes. He calmly, solemnly tells Alfred that he is going to devote his life to warring on all criminals. He asks Alfred if he will help. Alfred quietly agrees.

Six months later, Bruce calls the family attorney into his father's office. Bruce sits crosslegged in his father's huge chair, holding a large book open in his lap. He explains that he wishes to enlist the attorney's services, using his allowance, to keep orphanages, guardians, and scholastic institutions out of Bruce's life. Alfred will function as Bruce's guardian until Bruce is twenty-one. The attorney tells Bruce that all this is impossible. Bruce says no, it isn't. In fact, he's just figured out how to do it. He starts reading from the book in his lap.

Briefly, we see Bruce studying with tutors, who seem amazed at his aptitude and his intensity. Alfred watches, a little worried, a little confused, and very proud. Bruce comments to Alfred, at one point, that nothing in his studies contradicts the lesson he learned,

when he was seven years old: that the world only makes sense when you force it to.

Bruce, age twelve, lies in bed as Alfred reads him the concluding lines of "The Purloined Letter". Alfred smiles, sets the book down, and talks about the importance of the story in the development of detective fiction. Bruce, jaw set, eyes open, asks quietly if the killer was caught. And punished. Alfred assures him that he was. Bruce closes his eyes and sleeps peacefully.

Bruce, age nineteen, stands on a mountain top in South America. He and a dozen other men and women wear white karate robes. Bruce is attacked by a hulk of a man. He easily smashes the man to the ground, whirls, and brings his foot to the man's neck. His next blow would easily kill the man. Bruce steps back and smiles. He turns to look at his teacher, a fierce-looking black man named Jagger. Jagger strikes him roughly in the face, tells Bruce that he is still too violent, too angry in his approach. Bruce argues, saying that Jagger knows that Bruce is the finest student of Jagger's eclectic fighting style. Jagger tells Bruce that his feelings are interfering with his concentration, that rage ultimately robs him of his real power. Bruce says that's rhetoric, embarrassing Jagger in front of the class. Jagger decides to make an example of Bruce, and kicks him twice, viciously, knocking him to the ground. Bruce

DARK KNIGHT
~~HOLY TERROR~~/p7

looks up, grins, and says he'll show Jagger what his rage can do. Bruce seems to fly from the ground, striking Jagger's chest and stomach with powerful kicks, then using a kung fu punch to smash Jagger's nose. Jagger collapses, nearly unconscious. He watches Bruce leave, his face twisted with hate.

Bruce Wayne, age twenty-four, returns to Gotham City. He walks calmly down the narrow street where his parents were murdered, and stops, to lean casually against the streetlight that shines down on the stretch of pavement where his parents lay, seventeen years earlier. He can almost see them, and the face of a little boy whose world was smashed to bits. And another face, of a man who was not a demon ... From behind Bruce, we see three, then six pairs of feet approach.

They circle him quickly, merrily. One asks him what an uptown boy is doing in such a lousy neighborhood at such a late hour. Bruce, almost distractedly, says he was born here. One of them draws a nine millimeter pistol, and tells him to hand over his wallet. Bruce says no, I don't think so. Then he leaps above the gun, lashing out with a flying kick that sends the hood sprawling. Bruce drops to the ground,snatching up the dropped pistol, and aims at the next nearest hood. The pistol jams.

~~DARK KNIGHT~~
~~HOLY TERROR~~/p8

Then they are on him, kicking, stabbing, beating him horribly.

Bruce fights back, though outnumbered, wounding several of them. But they win the fight, taking his wallet and leaving him a bloody, broken mess on the sidewalk. After a long pause, he somehow begins an agonizing journey back to Wayne Manor.

... Bruce sits, pleading with his father. He has learned, tonight, that it is not enough to know how to fight, no matter how well. His mission is that of one against thousands. He needs something - something that will give him an edge. He pleads with his father. Show me the way.

There is a deafening crack of thunder. A high casing window shatters inward. For a moment everything is silent. Then, he hears the flapping of wings. The huge bat from the cave he'd seen when he was six years old glides into the study, hideous, frightening, and powerful. It lands on his father's bust, its wings draped on either side of his father's head. It stares at Bruce. Bruce looks deeply into the eyes of the demon, and smiles.

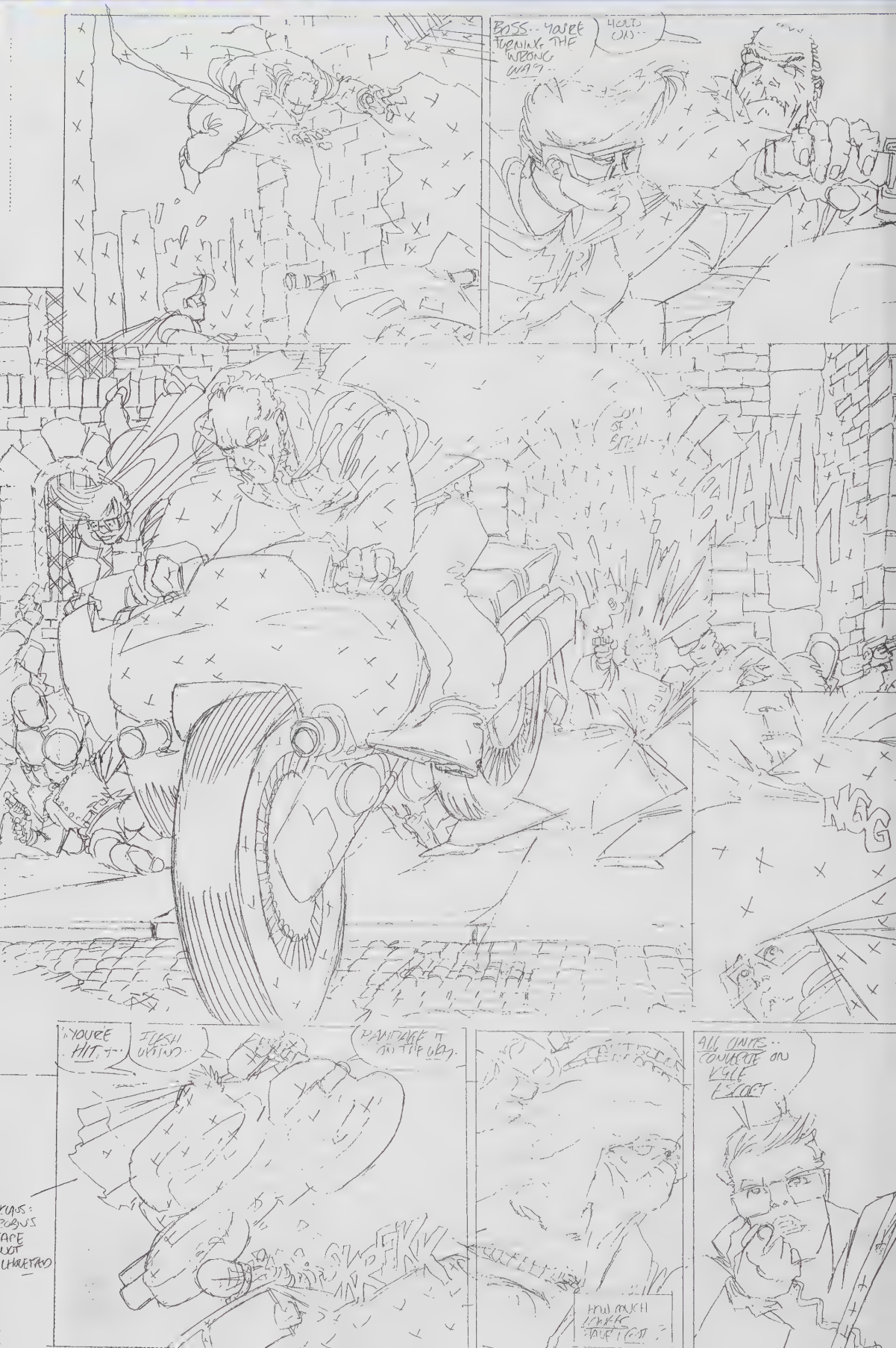
Thank you, father, he says.

PENCILS GALLERY

The unused first page from **THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS**







BOSS... YOU'RE
TURNING THE
WRONG
WAY?

HOLD
ON...

YOU
SEEN
STILL...

KAG

YOU'RE
HIT...

FUCK
YOU...

PAVING IT
IN THE WAY.

POSS:
POBUS
ARE
NOT
LHRETRAD

KAG

HOW MUCH
LONGER
TOGETHER?

ALL UNITS...
CONVERGE ON
KYLE
ESTAB.



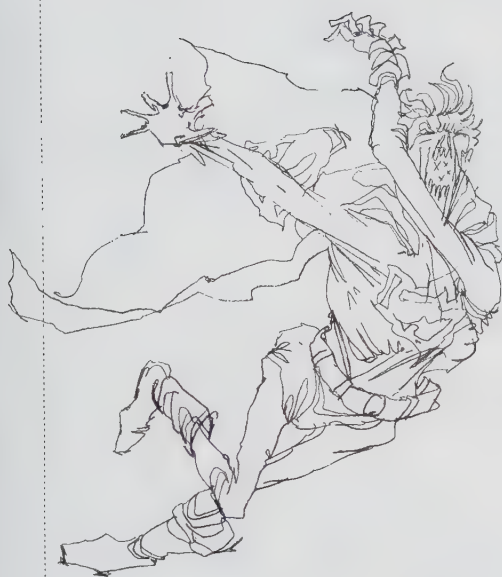
KANS: 19005
WILL TO
EXPLAIN
IN EXPLAN-



THE
DUMP.

IT'S A BREEDING
GROUND FOR
INSECTS AND
RODENTS.

SOME
RODENTS
FLY.



I HAVE
ALWAYS
LOVED
YOU...

THOUGH I WAS BORN A
GALAXY AWAY...

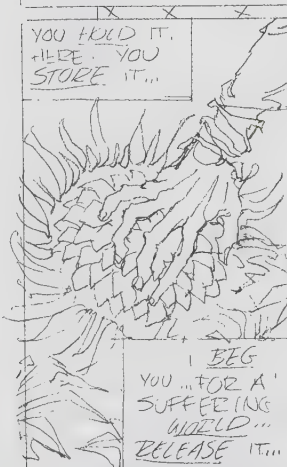
...I HAVE
ALWAYS
SEED
YOU...

THE SAME
POWER...
THE SUN'S
POWER...



...FUELS
VS
BOTH...

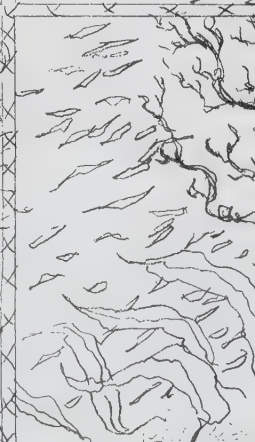
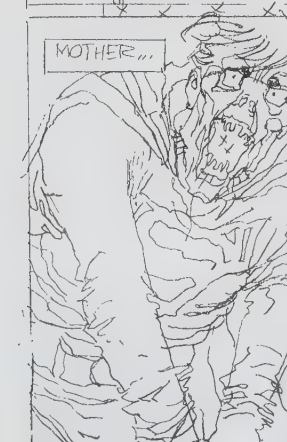
YOU HAD IT,
HERE. YOU
STORE IT...



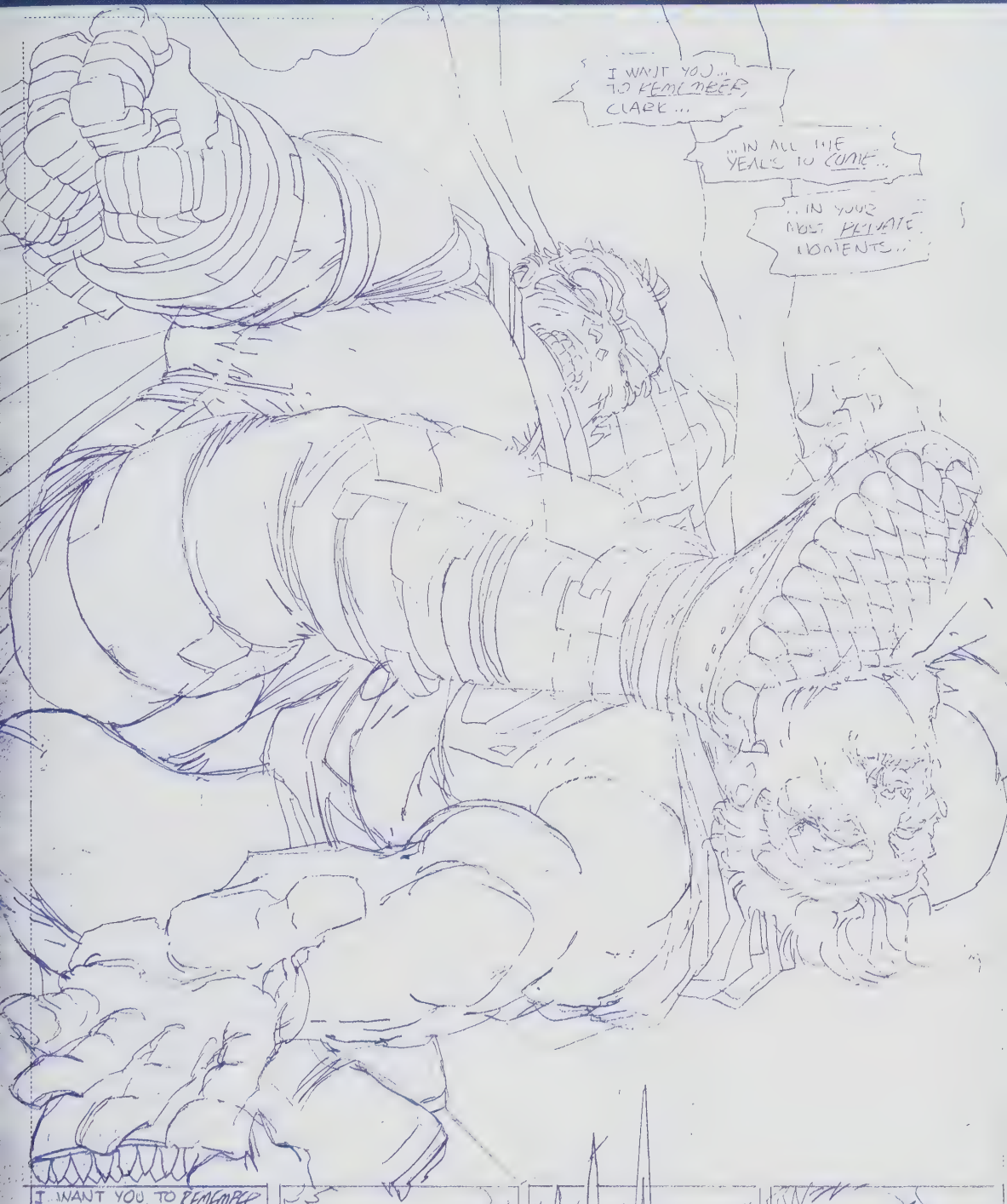
I BEG
YOU... FOR A
SUFFERING
WORLD...
RELEASE IT...



MOTHER...







I WANT YOU...
TO REMEMBER,
CLARK...

...IN ALL THE
YEARS TO COME...

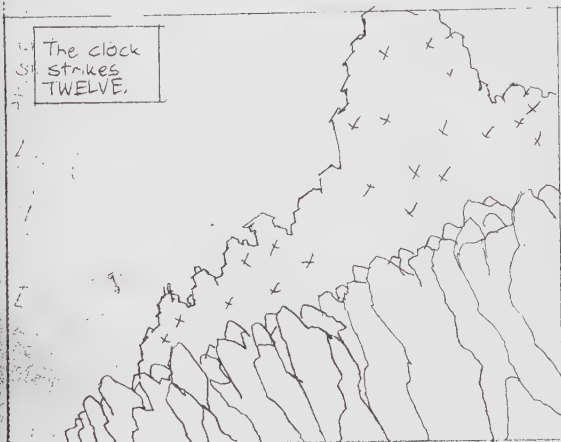
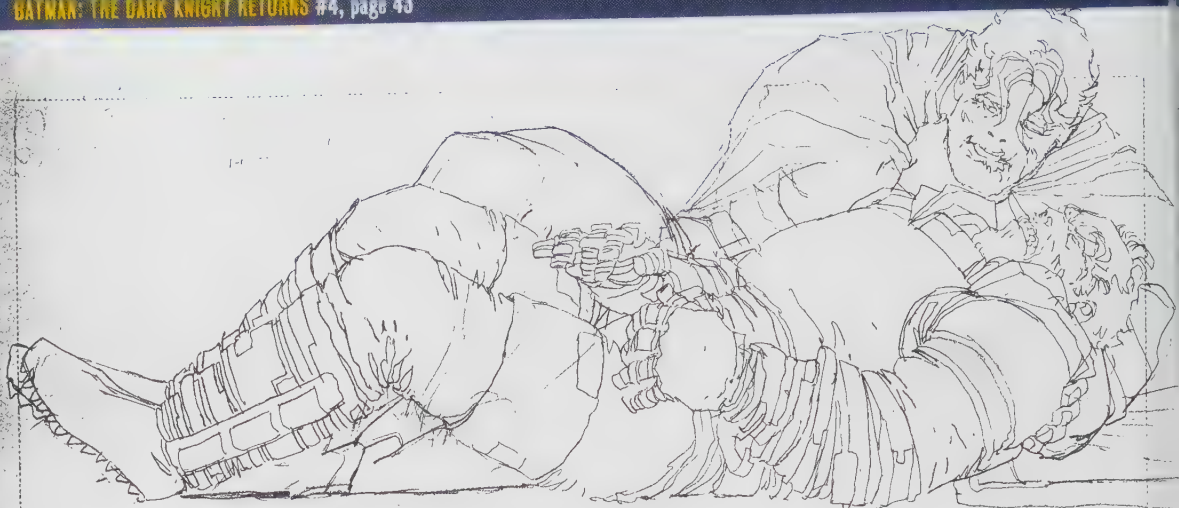
...IN YOUR
MOST PRIVATE
MOMENTS...

I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER
...MY HAND...AT
YOUR THROAT...

...I WANT
YOU TO
REMEMBER...

...THE ONE
MAN WHO
BEAT YOU...





The clock strikes TWELVE.



The ancient moor TREMBLES, beneath Alfred's feet.

Deep underground, COMPUTERS, holding every precious SECRET of the BATMAN, burst, and BURN...

Mrs. Wayne's priceless collection of PORCELAIN shatters, musically...

...The central mass of Wayne Manor SHUDS, as if ALIVE...

The world turns ruby RED. The manor roof RISES, madly, into the SKY, riding a pillar of FLAME.

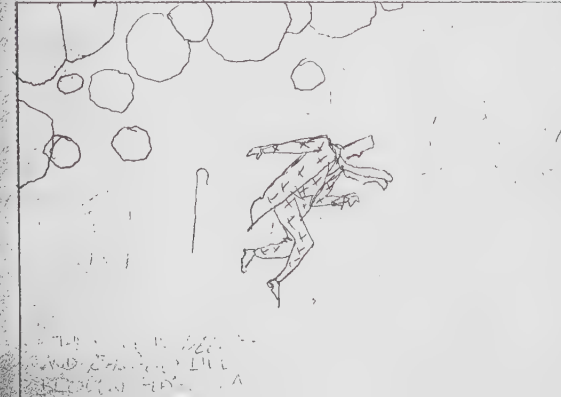
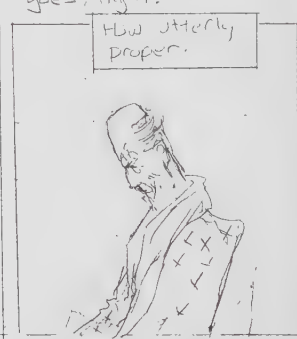
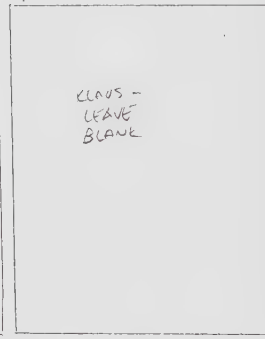
A JOLT travels the length of Alfred's SPINE. Of course, he thinks, as his head goes light.

...empty STABLES fly apart like toothpick MODELS...

...then VANISHES in a FLASH, bright as the SUN.

CLAWS - LEAVE BLANK

How utterly proper.



DON'T TOUCH HIM

HE'LL LEAVE ME
ALONE, NOW. IN
RETURN, I'LL
STAY QUIET.

SO WILL ROBIN
--AND THE REST---

THERE--SEE
THAT LEDGE?
GET A LAND
UP THERE.

RIGHT
BOSS.

CAREFUL
WITH
THAT--

RIGHT. ALL
SET, BOSS.

GOOD. NOW
GATHER ROUND.

WE HAVEN'T
GOT ALL
NIGHT
BOY.

THAT'S
NOT
TRUE...

WE HAVE YEARS--
AS MANY AS WE
NEED...

FIRST WE GET
A STEADY SUPPLY
OF WATER. THERE'S
A SPRING RIGHT
BENEATH--

--ROBIN!
SIT UP
STRAIGHT.

YEARS--TO
TRAIN AND
STUDY AND
PLAN...

...HERE, IN THE ENDLESS
CAVE, FAR PAST THE
BURNT REMAINS OF A
CRIMEFIGHTER WHO'S
TIME HAS PASSED...

IT BEGINS HERE--AN
ARMY--TO BRING
SENSE TO A WORLD
PLAGUED BY WORSE
THAN THIEVES AND
MURDERERS...

THIS WILL
BE A
GOOD
LIFE...

...GOOD
ENOUGH.

FRANK MILLER

Frank Miller began his career in comics in the late 1970s, first drawing then writing *Daredevil* for Marvel Comics, creating what was essentially a crime comic disguised as a superhero book. It was on *Daredevil* that Miller gained notoriety, honed his storytelling abilities, and took his first steps toward becoming a giant in the comics medium.

After *Daredevil*, Miller came to DC Comics, where he created *RONIN*, a science-fiction samurai drama that seamlessly melded Japanese and French comics traditions into the American mainstream; and after that, the groundbreaking and acclaimed *BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS* and *BATMAN: YEAR ONE*, both of which not only redefined the classic character, but also revitalized the industry itself.

Finally able to fulfill his dream of doing an all-out, straight-ahead crime series, Miller introduced *Sin City* in 1991. Readers responded enthusiastically to Miller's tough-as-leather noir drama, creating an instant sales success.

His multi-award-winning *300* series from Dark Horse, a telling of one of history's most glorious and underreported battles, was brought to full-blooded life in 1998.

In 2001, Miller returned to the superhero genre with the best-selling *BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT STRIKES AGAIN*.

Frank Miller continues to push the medium into new territory, exploring subject matter previously untouched in comics, and his work consistently receives the highest praise from his industry peers and readers everywhere.

In 2005, with the hugely successful release of *Sin City*, co-directed with Robert Rodriguez, Miller added a director's credit to his already impressive résumé and introduced his characters to an entirely new legion of fans worldwide.

KLAUS JANSON

Klaus Janson was born in 1952 in Coburg, Germany, and came to America in 1957.

As a child growing up in Connecticut, he learned how to read and write the English language almost exclusively from Lois Lane and Superman comics.

Even at that early age, delusions of competence overtook him and he would cut apart the comics and paste them onto paper to construct new stories. This eventually led to the notion that drawing the stories outright and preserving the comics might be a more efficient way of approaching this medium.

A valuable and life-saving apprenticeship with his mentor Dick Giordano encouraged him to continue.

After many summers of portfolio reviews and rejections, Marvel Comics offered a part-time office job applying grey tones to the black and white horror comic reprints that were glutting the market.

Two things happened that would change that.

First, *Daredevil* with Frank Miller in the mid 1980s was a rare opportunity for two artists to work unconstrained by the typical expectations or oversight of corporate thinking. An anomaly for mainstream publishing, *Daredevil* was a struggle between artistic instinct and intellect that, at its best, resulted in that perfect balance. And that moment of perfection led to their next collaboration on *THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS*.

The other step forward was teaching at The School of Visual Arts. Klaus believes that communication is the most powerful tool human beings possess. That ability to communicate can come in many forms but at its root is called storytelling.

Klaus lives in New York, where he writes, draws, inks, colors, teaches comics and where, from time to time, delusions of competence still overtake him.

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